

THE MONTREAL REPERTORY THEATRE : 1930 - 1961  
A HISTORY AND HANDLIST  
OF  
PRODUCTIONS

by

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## ABSTRACT

The Montreal Repertory Theatre mounted a regular series of play productions every year from 1930 to 1961. They deliberately set out to follow the Little Theatre tradition of Antoine while profiting from later developments in England, Ireland and the United States. At a time when no alternatives existed in Montreal they provided theatre education at a high level and helped in the formation of many distinguished careers.

This study examines the work of MRT in a historical context, and as revealed in the company's surviving documents and in contemporary reports. The written record is supplemented by interviews with persons who worked with MRT. A number of these have made contributions on a national scale to Canadian theatre.

## RESUME

Chaque année, de 1930 à 1961, le Montreal Repertory Theatre a produit une série de pièces. Ces programmations annuelles respectaient la tradition du "Petit Théâtre" telle qu' établi par Antoine, tout en intégrant les derniers développements des dramaturges et metteurs en scène de l'Angleterre, de l'Irlande et des Etats-Unis.

Durant toutes ces années, le M.R.T. a été, à toute fin utile, le seul endroit à Montréal où on pouvait parfaire sa formation en art dramatique. De fait le M.R.T. et ses différents ateliers a servi de tremplin à plusieurs carrières.

Nous vous présentons, avec plaisir, ces 31 années d'efforts, de réussites et d'échecs, telle que découvert en fouillant et questionnant la presse écrite de cette époque de meme que les quelques documents toujours existants du M.R.T. lui-meme. Pour compléter cet historique, nous avons interviewé plusieurs personnes qui ont travaillé en M.R.T., dont quelques-unes ont atteint une renommée nationale.

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Norma Springford spoke to me at length about her busy years in Montreal. John Pratt, man of the theatre and businessman, brought a sharp eye to his review of the MRT in

its years of growth, and in what it became. I thank him for his time and his encouraging interest.

Griffith Brewer and Victor Knight spoke of the personalities of those who had worked with MRT and of the change in conditions for English theatre in the 'fifties. I thank these committed practitioners for their time and their insights. I am grateful to Myron Galloway, tireless devotee of the theatre, for helping me to understand the personalities and the intricacies of MRT from the viewpoint of worker (writer, actor, director) and critic.

Alan MacMillan generously allowed me to quiz him on the latter days of MRT when he apprenticed under Bill Springford and as a member of the committee trying to revive the stricken theatre company. Vesta Jorgensen was one of a number of persons who recounted their good experiences as members of MRT audiences. Munro Brown talked with enthusiasm of the hectic wartime years and told, as a former officer of the company, about changes accompanying the peace. To all these I express my gratitude.

Finally I am indebted beyond words to my family who have suffered my absences (physical and mental) without complaint through the length of on this project, and whose mealtimes have for so long been monopolised by news of the latest discoveries concerning MRT. Sincere thanks for your patience and understanding to Mary, and to Catherine, Maggie and Caroline.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Montreal Repertory Theatre presented a program of at least half a dozen plays in each season between 1930 and 1961. Throughout this period the company enjoyed a reputation as Montreal's most consistent provider of high-quality English theatre. In addition to the major productions MRT regularly experimented with unusual material which did not come from popular Broadway or West End sources. This interest in the widest variety of theatrical experience was inseparable from a deliberate mission to educate. Thirty years before the National Theatre School opened they started their own School of the Theatre which provided training in all branches of theatre arts. The MRT--for most of its existence an amateur enterprise--constantly drew professionals to work with the company, and in turn profited from the experience these individuals brought. In the three decades of its existence MRT suffered many setbacks for which it was not responsible, yet the morale of members was so strong that the work continued. By the 'sixties MRT had probably outlived its usefulness in the light of Montreal's demographic changes, and Canada's altered theatrical realities. The nurturing given in the 'thirties to Montreal's developing French theatre is one of MRT's proudest achievements, as is the number of those who worked with the company and went on to earn national reputations as actors, directors, critics and theatre managers.

This study begins with an account of the historical background of MRT from printed sources and then makes use of contemporary records. The Montreal Gazette is a primary source. The theatre critics of this paper showed justifiable civic pride in the company, and were proportionately dismayed when productions did not come up to scratch. On many occasions the city as a whole was castigated for choosing not to recognise the value of the company and for failing to provide necessary financial support.

A significant primary source is the National Theatre School Archive which holds many programs and copies of CUE-- the company's regular magazine. Further material is found in the Rosanna Seaborn Archive and the Sally Starke Archive-- both deposited in the McCord Museum of McGill University. Seaborn and Starke were members of MRT. Their collections contain several programs and copies of CUE which supplement the NTS material. The Sally Starke Archive also contains some copies of Minutes of meetings and other unpublished working documents.

Eugene Jousse and Ferdinand Biondi have private papers which they generously allowed me to use.

The most informative work in print is Herbert Whittaker's lengthy essay in Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadien-- "Whittaker's Montreal: A Theatrical Autobiography." His work with MRT is highlighted here though not at the expense of other theatrical activity in the city.

Chapter One  
The MRT Pedigree

The Montreal Repertory Theatre was founded at a public meeting in Victoria Hall, Westmount, on the evening of 23 November 1929. At the meeting, in addition to interested citizens, were future leading lights, Martha Allan, Rupert Caplan and Sir Andrew MacPhail, the Montreal Star's critic, S. Morgan Powell, and guests of honour, Sir Barry Jackson of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and Margaret Anglin, one of Canada's most distinguished actresses. <sup>1</sup>

The new organisation was to be called "The Theatre Guild of Montreal" in deliberate imitation of New York's Theatre Guild with that name's connotations of dedication and careful craftsmanship. The group's community-wide outlook impressed at least one disinterested member of the audience. "The Theatre Guild," stated the prospectus quoted by Robert Ayre of the Canadian Forum, "seeks the support and co-operation of all amateur bodies within its range. It is in no way intended to supplant them or to interfere with their activities." <sup>2</sup> With this support, "the Theatre Guild cannot fail to help such amateur groups in obtaining a higher level of interpretation." <sup>3</sup> The meeting heralded a momentous new adventure. Twenty years later the drama critic of the Montreal Gazette in an anniversary article recalls the occasion:

The night of the meeting...witnessed theatrical sparks fanned into flame. Sir Barry discussed the Birmingham and Manchester Repertories, spoke on the

feasibility of a worthy counterpart in Montreal. Born on that evening was the determination to form a theatrical group which would present plays known and untried, not merely for profit, but not forgetful of a theatre's obligation to earn its right to exist. ....The organization was to be non-profit for incorporators. No fewer than ten productions were planned for the first season.<sup>4</sup>

Six months later, after the Theatre Guild had mounted its first production, a further meeting was reported in the Canadian Forum. The state of theatre in Montreal was described as "lamentable" despite the great amount of theatrical activity. At the meeting, reports Marie Stehle (who would later be Librarian of MRT,) were sixty-five individuals representing thirty-five different organizations.<sup>5</sup> In addition to these non-profit groups the city had its stock company at the Orpheum, plus His Majesty's Theatre, which was used by the touring companies. Throughout North America by the end of the 'twenties, when movies had been transformed into talkies and were drawing huge crowds, the live professional theatre was in no very healthy shape. Add to this the effect of the 1929 Wall Street Crash with its attendant economic uncertainties, and we are entitled to wonder about the wisdom of starting a new theatre company at that time. Herbert Whittaker explains in two words--"Freight rates!"<sup>6</sup> As an ex-C.P.R. man he was naturally conscious of the practicalities of touring and how this was affected by the steep rise in railroad charges after the Crash. The increase was big enough to prevent Montreal

from being a worthwhile stop for road companies. While the total population of the city was substantial, the relatively small English audience for professional theatre meant the city was barely profitable. When the narrow margin was removed, touring to Montreal no longer made commercial sense. In Whittaker's judgement the city needed a first-rate theatre of its own. The time was ripe for MRT.

The MRT founding meeting continued a process which had begun in Paris on 30 March 1887 with the opening of André Antoine's Théâtre Libre. On this stage, with his own household furniture, he presented a world in conformity with the theories of Naturalism propounded by his friend, Zola. Antoine explained his eclectic choice of plays to the theatre critic of Le Figaro: "I am convinced that the task of the Théâtre Libre is to establish new directions." <sup>7</sup> He was impressed by the theatrical innovations of the Saxe-Meiningen troupe which he saw in 1888, particularly by their use of crowds in which the performers were encouraged to act in a realistic fashion, and by the alternation of roles whereby the star of one night would be an extra on the morrow. <sup>8</sup> These practices would become principles in the Little Theatre movement fathered by Antoine.

One of the eye-witnesses of Antoine's theatrical revolution was the Dutch businessman J.T.Grein, who in 1887 was working in Paris for the company which three years earlier had sent him to London. On his return to that city he proceeded to found a theatre of his own-The Independent Theatre of London. On the playbill for his first production he

printed "Théâtre Libre" under the name of his company to indicate fidelity to Antoine's purposes. The policy of Grein's theatre was "to give special performances of plays which have a LITERARY and ARTISTIC, rather than a commercial merit." 9  
 Half a century later Grein would make his way to Canada as an adjudicator for the Dominion Drama Festival in 1934 and see the MRT following in Antoine's footsteps.

The Théâtre Libre was not alone as a force reshaping European theatre in the late nineteenth century. Impressionist painters such as Cezanne, Manet, Monet and Renoir were experimenting with new lighting effects on canvas. Their vision found its place in the theatre as electrical stage lighting became available. New pictorial or Symbolist effects enhanced the directorial authority claimed by the innovators, Craig and Appia. The latter made an important contribution to the theatre of the future with his theory of dance which "provided a speculative accompaniment for the vigorous renaissance of the drama which everywhere was taking place over Europe." 10  
 Craig, too, emphasised dance while insisting on the comprehensive nature of the theatre experience:

The Art of the Theatre is neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and color, which are the very heart of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance.

The situation in North America at the turn of the century offers a sorry contrast to this Europe fermenting with enthusiasm. Theatre was in a state of wretched decline as a consequence of the Syndicate, which had virtually destroyed the possibility of independent management. "The evil effects of the system in general," wrote critic Sheldon Cheney in 1917, were "loss of freedom for the artist; destruction of the training-grounds in which both actor and playwright had formerly gained experience and early success; and ruinous control by New York over all the important theaters in the country."<sup>12</sup> The consequence of this stranglehold was that "ten years ago we had not one theater artist of any sort who was internationally important."<sup>13</sup>

In the ten years which followed some significant stirrings could be seen, and non-commercial Little Theatres emerged in several parts of the country. In New York the Washington Square Players, from which the New York Theatre Guild would develop, proclaimed their intentions in a 1915 Manifesto: "We have only one policy in regard to the plays which we will produce--they must have artistic merit."<sup>14</sup> While the company proposed to deal primarily with American plays they would also include in their repertory "the works of well-known European authors which have been ignored by the commercial managers."<sup>15</sup>

The inspiration given by such organizations as the Abbey Theatre and the Moscow Art Theatre propelled the Guild's founders to make heroic efforts. After only five seasons they were able to sell \$600,000 worth of bonds to raise money for

building a new theatre. The success of their first ten years was astounding. "The Theatre Guild was the supreme producing organization," writes theatre historian Emory Lewis in reviewing their productions from 1919 to 1929.<sup>16</sup> In this time they had presented many of Shaw's works plus an impressive list by European writers: Kaiser, Toller, Werfel, Tolstoy, Andreyev, Strindberg, Claudel, Molnar, Capek, Copeau, Pagnol and Obey. The Guild's American list (looking forward somewhat) was to include R.E.Sherwood, S.Howard, S.N.Behrman,<sup>17</sup> P.Barry, M. Anderson, William Inge and Eugene O'Neill.

The success of the Guild may be in some way measured by the stature of those who found fault with it. Members of the breakaway company, The Group, with its own lively history, deplored the lack of strong commitment on the part of the Guild's managers. "They had no blood relationship with the plays they dealt in," writes the Group founder, Harold Clurman.<sup>18</sup> "They set the plays out in the shop window for as many customers as possible to buy."<sup>19</sup> This disdain for commercial motivation extended to the productions themselves which Clurman describes as "rather pretty, (with a kind of disguised middle-class stuffiness) and they nearly always lacked passion or pointedness."<sup>20</sup>

The Guild, according to critic John Gassner, was never able to develop a recognizable style of production as had been achieved by such directors as Reinhardt, Stanislavsky and Copeau. "We have had," he maintained, "no such distinctiveness in America. The Theatre Guild, in business for thirty-four years.... at the time of writing, was never able to develop

it." <sup>21</sup> Not that the productions were unworthy of attention. "A Theatre Guild production has usually had a good deal of polish. But patina is not the equivalent of style." <sup>22</sup> Despite these complaints the North American continent by the late 'twenties could take satisfaction in a renewed living theatre which offered hope of a livelihood to creative writers and designers, and which involved capable craftsmen, an appreciative audience and a corps of acute critics. The proposed MRT could confidently be based on such a solid foundation.

This Canadian offspring of the Theatre Guild was able to compound with the North American experience a strain of particular theatrical developments coming from the British Isles. In London, following Grein's Independent Theatre, there appeared in 1894 the Elizabethan Stage Society of William Poel which presented the works of Shakespeare on a reconstructed Elizabethan stage. In 1899 the Incorporated Stage Society was founded to put on plays which were not at the time acceptable to commercial managements. The Society's Sunday evening shows used actors who gave their time gratis so they might enjoy the experience of working in plays which would never be a part of their professional lives. "Out of the Stage Society," observes Grein's wife in the biography she wrote of him, "sprang the Vedrenne-Barker management at the Court Theatre, which established Shaw as a paying dramatist and revealed the genius of Granville Barker as a producer." <sup>23</sup>

Following the Court seasons of 1904-07 it is instructive to consider the experience of Sir Barry Jackson in the provinces. In 1913 he opened the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, which produced such acting virtuosos as Cedric Hardwick, Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson and Paul Scofield. Norman Marshall notes the perverseness of provincial audiences which refused to support plays unless they had been validated by London success. "In twenty-one years," he wrote, "Barry Jackson lost a hundred thousand pounds by persisting in running a repertory theatre as a place for fresh, creative work instead of a pallid imitation of the London stage." 24

In so acting Jackson was not a halfwit; he knew how to play the commercial game and win. In London between 1922 and 1934 he produced forty-two plays and made a satisfying profit by relying solely on his own tastes.<sup>25</sup> In his eyes there were more serious considerations than money.

Jackson was present at the 1929 meeting when MRT was founded. He was at the time on a tour to lecture about theatre in a number of Canadian communities. Two years later he brought his company on a six-month tour across the country and showed Canadians what a repertory company could achieve. In an account of Jackson's journey, printed in the Birmingham Post years later we have a glimpse of the possibilities which he discerned in Canadian theatre. During the tour he had announced his intention of giving "'The Dominion Drama Festival Prize' to be awarded each year for the Best Canadian Play. 'There isn't such a thing,' Sir Barry was told. 'That's why I am giving it,' he replied." 26

In the course of the 'thirties, Martha Allan, founder of MRT, won the trophy for her play, All On A Summer's Day. In 1938 another MRT author, Arthur Prévost, won the trophy for his work, Maldonne. This time the play was written in French. Sir Barry's generous gift had proved to be a useful stimulus for both Canada's major language groups.

Martha Allan's own writing, though important in its time, was only a minor facet of her versatility. Her most significant contribution to Canadian theatre lies in her founding and running the Montreal Repertory Theatre. Allan belongs to that recognizable class of theatrical personages--the Distinguished Lady Founders. Earliest member of the class was Emma Cons, a social reformer, who in the 1880's turned London's ill-reputed Victoria Theatre into the Royal Victoria Hall and Coffee Tavern. Lilian Baylis joined her aunt Emma to help run what came to be known as the "Old Vic." William Poel was employed there for two years as manager before starting his own Elizabethan Stage Society. When Cons died in 1912 Baylis turned the theatre into "a home for Shakespeare, making it in effect the first working National Theatre."<sup>27</sup> In this building "from 1914 to 1923 all Shakespeare's plays were presented for the first time in the First Folio text."<sup>28</sup>

The enterprises Baylis undertook gave Britain a solid basis for opera and ballet as the century progressed. The Old Vic has no rival in the number of first class directors and performers given to the British stage and in the impact of its work on the public. When first formed the National Theatre

Company was temporarily housed in the premises of the Old Vic. "Perhaps one of the highest compliments that could be paid to the pioneering work done by Lilian Baylis' directors and their successors," so Roberts, historian of the Old Vic, tells us, "was that only when the National Theatre Company left the Old Vic did many people realize that the National Theatre and the Old Vic were not one and the same thing." <sup>29</sup>

The next pair of Lady Founders, whose example helped mould Martha Allan, were Annie Horniman and Lady Gregory. Miss Horniman, a woman blessed with wealth derived from the nineteenth-century Horniman's Tea empire, was involved with Lady Gregory in founding the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, and was independently responsible for founding Britain's first repertory theatre--the Gaiety--in Manchester. Both these theatres had an influence reaching to the MRT.

Horniman's major contributions to the Abbey were the money and business sense which enabled the theatre to become established. This support was to cost her close to twenty thousand pounds. <sup>30</sup> For her part Lady Gregory supplied the heart. Where Wilde and Shaw had been forced to cross the Irish Sea to exercise their métier as writers, Gregory stayed in Dublin. She helped the Irish Literary Theatre become the Abbey Theatre Company, and personally took up a pen to provide Irish plays for the stage. The Irish experience was not dissimilar to that of Canada with respect to the overwhelming weight of British culture. Both subject countries had moved through "the long slow struggle into self-awareness," as Saddlemyer expresses it. <sup>31</sup> They had

recognized "a sense of apartness from Britain while dependent on her traditions and themes, leading to the warping of imagery, setting, even history in all literatures; the gradual blending of political and intellectual urges into forms of 'literary nationalism.'<sup>32</sup> For Gregory the proof that times had changed came with the presentation in 1901 of Douglas Hyde's play, The Twisting of The Rope, described in her book, Our Irish Theatre,<sup>33</sup> as "The first Gaelic play produced in any theatre." Fourteen of Gregory's plays were presented by the Abbey in its first five years of existence. The company for which she was granted the patent flourishes still.

After the Irish venture was well-launched, her co-founder, Horniman, returned to England where she settled on Manchester as the place to found her second theatre. Having seen the blossoming of Irish writing at first hand she was sensitive to the importance of finding new authors. "One thing I want to do," she insisted, "is to encourage young English playwrights. I want to find English dramatists who will write better than the Irish."<sup>34</sup> Her proclaimed commitment was very personal. "If the Lancashire playwrights will send their plays to me," she promised, "I shall....read them through. Let them write<sup>35</sup> ....about their friends and enemies--about real life."

In her energetic way Horniman mounted a dozen plays in the first season and organized a tour of England when the season was over. Her appeal for writers was a major force in starting the "Manchester Movement" and giving a national voice to Britain's working poor. The Gaiety was the first repertory company in Britain and parent of the vast modern repertory

theatre movement. The MRT has a direct connection with Horniman through John Hoare, who in 1943 became Supervising Director of the Montreal company. Writing as a student in the University Magazine of April 1911, he comments scathingly on local theatre as he has experienced it. "Montreal," he wrote, "is utterly divorced from every high ideal and true reality of the finest English drama."<sup>36</sup> England is typified by "overcrowded and unsympathetic markets."<sup>37</sup> The United States is victimized by "ruinously fatal commercialism."<sup>38</sup> He proposed that some public-spirited men invite the Horniman company to do a season in Montreal and Toronto. The idea met with approval, and the company came the very next year. In 1913 they came again, extending the tour to spend half their twelve weeks in the United States. War, and then the demise of the company, prevented further Gaiety tours, but, as Pogson tells us, "the repertory seed had been sown, and America could be left to produce the fruit herself."<sup>39</sup>

In Montreal the fruit took a long time to ripen. After the First World War, during which many groups suspended activities because of the lack of men, "two separate attempts were launched to organize Little Theatre groups that would be free of religious bias."<sup>40</sup> The Studio Players lapsed without a single production. The Court Players mounted two productions in the 1919-1920 season only to pass out of existence when the Community Players opened in the Fall of 1920. Two of MRT's founders--Martha Allan and Rupert Caplan--worked with the Community Players, as did John Hoare. After a promising start this company folded in 1924 leaving a legacy to be picked up

by MRT.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, in the absence of any Montreal theatre to which they were willing to devote energy, Allan and Caplan departed for the United States where they would broaden their experience by joining two significant yet very different theatres.

Martha Allan worked with the Pasadena Community Playhouse for a number of years. From many points of view this institution, founded in 1917, was one of the most exciting theatres in North America. Under the direction of its founder, Gilmore Brown, the theatre enjoyed a period of spectacular growth in its first seven years. In the first season there was a nucleus of paid players, with amateurs called in for minor parts. This was found to be unsatisfactory. "An entirely non-professional basis," the Director explains, "was adopted the next year and has been maintained ever since. Experienced actors are not excluded; on the contrary, their co-operation is welcomed. But they always play on a volunteer basis in the Pasadena Community Playhouse, and the majority of all casts are amateurs."<sup>42</sup> MRT's practice would turn out to be very similar for more than twenty years.

The Pasadena company was a great commercial success. Theatre historian Sheldon Cheney writes in 1925 about the twenty-two productions mounted in the most recent season. There had been 214 performances which played to a total audience of 47,214.<sup>43</sup> Financial support from the community had permitted the building of a theatre valued at nearly \$400,000, which was "materially as complete as any

institutional playhouse in the country, with one of the most modern stages anywhere, an auditorium seating eight hundred, a green room many times the size of the Guild's," together with wardrobe space, sewing room and many other first class facilities.<sup>44</sup> One of the fundamentals of the company's success was the unity of purpose achieved by having a single director, particularly one whose policy was to involve as many members of the local community as possible. By 1925 more than 5,000 individuals had taken part since the founding of the theatre.<sup>45</sup>

The business successes of this company were matched by its artistic achievements. "It cannot be called a compromise theatre in general," Cheney tells us, "for there are eleven Shakespearean productions in the list....and there is more than usual of Sheridan, Wilde, Molière, 'special' moderns, Strindberg, Yeats, Andreyev, Kennedy, Maeterlinck, besides the usual Shaw, Barrie and Galsworthy."<sup>46</sup> Cheney also noted that the program included Broadway successes enabling the local community to see productions of New York plays which seldom travelled as far as Pasadena, and also to benefit from an art theatre. The formula which the Playhouse had found for overall success is expressed thus: "the art theater should keep ahead of its audience without going to the ruthless extreme."<sup>47</sup> It was a philosophy which Allan was to bring back with her to Montreal. While she leaned more towards London's West End rather than Broadway for the popular strain in her seasons, she certainly aimed at commercial success. Moreover, in her twelve year reign at MRT, she was well able to exploit the advantages of single-handed artistic control.

Allan's partner, Rupert Caplan, turned to the founding of MRT after recent experience of working with the Provincetown Players. This was the group joined in 1917 by Eugene O'Neill, "who were to help him to fame and whose fame he undoubtedly made."<sup>48</sup> Caplan worked at the Provincetown with Susan Glaspell, George Cram Cook and was, according to Herbert Whittaker, "The Pilot in Eugene O'Neill's 1924 adaptation of Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner, directed by Robert Edmond Jones and James Light."<sup>49</sup>

The history of the Provincetown Players starts with their original Playwrights' Theatre, founded "to give American playwrights a chance to work out their ideas in freedom."<sup>50</sup> A building in New York was converted to a theatre and success in the shape of fame and fortune came to the company, principally in consequence of such plays by O'Neill as The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape. In 1921 the theatre, in the absence of promising new plays, opted for a year of sabbatical leave, and in October 1923 opened with a re-formed company and a new name. Unfortunately the glory days had gone. Extended runs and revivals became the order of the day. "Rents, salaries, service," say the Provincetown's historians, "so negligible in the early days, now rolled up inexorably, making any dribble of money into the box office seem better than none, and a dark house something to be avoided at all costs."<sup>51</sup>

The enterprise wallowed on, always with the hope that the success of the earlier Provincetown could be recaptured. This was not to be. In December 1929, a few weeks after the Stock

Market Crash, the theatre closed for ever, leaving behind a heritage of honourable achievement:

The Provincetown was more a laboratory than a theater; it might not choose 'the best' plays. To it belonged the task of developing playwrights, of taking risks with unknown actors and designers.... if it had done no more than give Eugene O'Neill his opportunity, it would deserve the place it holds in the history of American drama.

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By the time the work of the Provincetown Players and their successors was done, Caplan was back in Montreal producing plays with the Y.M.H.A. Allan and Caplan took up the mission of Little Theatre from where the Community Players had let it fall. Though the two were similarly inspired by recent experiences in the United States, and brought a common dedication to the work of founding MRT, they were not equals. Martha Allan was the dominant partner; the company would bear her stamp. She was no stranger to power and its uses.

\* \* \*

## Chapter Two

### Martha Allan-Distinguished Lady Founder

Marguerite Martha Allan, MRT's own Distinguished Lady Founder, was born into one of Canada's wealthiest families near the end of the nineteenth century. Her grandfather, Sir Hugh Allan, founded the Allan Shipping Lines which brought thousands of immigrants across the Atlantic to this country. He was also the man from whom Prime Minister Macdonald borrowed money with disastrous consequences when the national railway project was in serious trouble. The family seat--'Ravenscrag'--was an Italianate palace (still preserved as the Allan Memorial Institute of the Royal Victoria Hospital) built higher on Mount Royal than any other residence, and offering a sumptuous example of conspicuous spending.

In 1870 Sir Hugh was probably the richest man in Canada. When Montreal's Golden Square Mile contained seventy percent of Canada's wealth, his was the largest house. When the Governors-General visited Montreal this was where they would stay. The son, Sir (Hugh) Montagu Allan (Martha's father), described his profession in the 1928-29 Who's Who In Canada as "Capitalist."<sup>53</sup> At that time he was President of two companies, one of them the Merchant Bank of Canada, and Director of eight others. His education was obtained at Bishop's University and in Paris.

Martha Allan was born into this commercial aristocracy in Ravenscrag itself. Her education was bilingual, first in Montreal and later in London and Paris. At the outbreak of the

First World War she was studying drama in Paris. On returning to Montreal a strong sense of social obligation caused her to seek appropriate training and go back to France as an ambulance driver. In the course of the war the Allan family lost Martha's two sisters and her brother,<sup>54</sup> while Martha herself "suffered a shrapnel wound that would plague her all her life."<sup>55</sup> Despite the disability "Miss Allan was often, and quite rightly," recalled the Gazette's Thomas Archer at the time of her death, "compared with a dynamo. The simile fits so well because just as a dynamo generates the electricity which keeps a great plant in function, so that amazing combination of intelligence, energy, persuasiveness and extraordinary personal charm was literally the soul of the Montreal Repertory Theatre, the real, basic secret of its success."<sup>56</sup>

Nineteen years after her death Archer was still fascinated by what he had seen Allan achieve. "She was an actress of no mean accomplishment," he recalled, "who could and would play a star or walk-on part at the drop of a hat. She was an even better director. She could walk in at the last moment, so to speak, and put a hopeless situation in what it ought to be for the 'customers' on opening night."<sup>57</sup>

As a bilingual Montrealer Allan identified with both linguistic heritages to the point where she used the French form of her name, Marthe, in early MRT play programs. In this spirit she encouraged the opening of a Section Française of MRT which she "made vigorous for a considerable period partly in the interests of entente cordiale."<sup>58</sup>

The theatre which she founded as an umbrella organization, in a city with many groups competing for talent, quickly established its primacy and became, in Herbert Whittaker's phrase, "the mighty Montreal Repertory Theatre."<sup>59</sup> For a dozen years she ran a company which presented successful seasons of major plays, experimented in the studio with avant-garde material, and set up an influential School of the Theatre. She was not a mere 'queen bee' administrator, complacently taking credit while others toiled around her. Like her Biblical namesake, she worked too. Some fifty of the group's productions were directed by her. In the city she was one of the most sought after leading ladies. Her competence as administrator, director and player was never questioned.

An important aspect of Allan's theatre activity concerned the Dominion Drama Festival. At Ottawa's Rideau Hall meeting in October 1932, at which the Festival was launched, theatre personalities from all over the country were present. MRT at that time was in its infancy, having mounted fewer than a dozen major productions, but Allan's reputation was already made. "Everyone recognised Martha Allan from the Montreal Repertory Theatre," recalls Betty Lee, historian of the DDF. "Who could mistake that slicked back hair, the quick gestures, the expensive clothes...?"<sup>60</sup> From Lee we learn the importance of social connections in the Governor-General's new organization. "Martha Allan...was naturally a perfect person to be associated with the early Dominion Drama Festival. She had money, social position, she could organize, and she knew

all about the stage." <sup>61</sup> Allan's record shows clearly that she would not have appreciated having her assets listed in this particular order. Until activities were suspended at the outbreak of war, Allan worked tirelessly with the DDF in the Quebec Region and nationally. Her influence in Montreal enabled her to encourage participation in both French and English sections of the Festival.

Allan brought to her hectic activity an informed mind and a coherent philosophy. She was not looking for mere talented automatons when casting. "A cultured actor," she insists, "must know the history of the world theatre, and its playwrights, world literature, and the manner and style of every period. He must understand the psychology of motion, of psychoanalysis, of the expression of emotion and the logic of feeling." <sup>62</sup>

Of course the actor's physical equipment had to be adequate for every task. Allan demanded nothing less than "complete physical rhythm and control of every muscle and sinew. Gymnastics, voice placing, diction, pantomime and make up--form the routine necessary to make an actor pleasing to watch and to hear." <sup>63</sup>

No less important was the actor's soul. "An actor," she maintained, "can not exist without a soul able to accomplish at the first command of the will every action and change stipulated, so that he is capable of living through any situation demanded by the author." <sup>64</sup>

The privileged circumstances of Allan's birth, and her lifelong absorption in theatrical excellence, did not distance her from the world in which she was living. This world was changing fast and inevitably having an effect on theatre itself. "In Europe and the United States," said Allan, "new forms are evolving from the old to fit the kaleidoscopic needs of an incredible generation."<sup>65</sup> She made her own symbolic rejection of family tradition by departing from the luxuries of Ravenscrag's principal chambers and setting up her own modest apartment over the coach house.<sup>66</sup> In her enthusiasm for a theatre which would more truly reflect the world as it was, she used language that came unexpectedly from the daughter of a self-proclaimed Capitalist:

The hope for a new theatre and a new theatre art is something more than an aesthetic day dream. To the extent that it is typical of a collective effort already begun, which is setting the stage for a new social order, we as workers and citizens shall be stimulated to play our individual roles more successfully.<sup>67</sup>

While Allan's heart sought a more egalitarian society the above words need to be set beside the contemporary observation of her "watchman, office boy and general dogsbody," Arthur Carveth, whom she allowed to sleep in the Union Street Studio in the 'thirties. "She never really recognised the privations undergone by some of her supporters," recalls Carveth. "She never seemed to take into consideration the fact that the players had to walk to and

from rehearsal because they had to save their carfare to get to daytime jobs." <sup>68</sup> Despite her best intentions Allan never would be part of the common herd; her destiny was to lead others.

One direction in which Allan showed leadership--an interest which she and Horniman had in common--was in the search for new writers. "Dramatic expression," she asserted, "is inextricably mixed with the social order." <sup>69</sup> What had been created to that time (1933) by Canadian playwrights she dismissed with scorn. "It may be that we in Canada are mud puppies. Generally speaking, our plays are shabby and drab, pretentious and dull, or pallid and sentimental." <sup>70</sup> Allan would take up her own pen and help dispel the notion that playwriting need be "reticent" or "muted by a desire for gentility." <sup>71</sup> Her writing was good enough to win her Jackson's DDF trophy for the Best Canadian Play.

This forthright personality dominated Montreal theatre in the 'thirties in the same way that Lady Tupper in Winnipeg presided over the prairies. In Herbert Whittaker's words, <sup>72</sup> "Lady Tupper had the title; Martha Allan had the cachet." Allan's reputation grew as her amateur MRT became solidly established, yet in 1934 she surprised the country's theatre devotees by stating in an interview, "I loathe Amateur <sup>73</sup> Theatricals!" The words were in no way a denial of her MRT commitment, as she explains in MRT's magazine, CUE. "'Amateur Theatricals' was used in the sense that implies <sup>74</sup> puerility or carelessness in production." She took this opportunity to proclaim her total dedication to Little

Theatre, while pointing out a number of unavoidable problems. "The stage for full artistic development needs people with real talent who can devote their whole lives and energies to its study and service....and that means professionalism in the Little Theatre just as much as on the commercial stage." <sup>75</sup>

Allan's experience in the United States and Canada led her to the bleak conclusion that perhaps 2% of would-be actors found in a community group had the talent to move into wider circles. She was painfully familiar with the process by which a talented individual looking for new challenges quickly abandons the community group which nurtured him. To forestall desertions of this kind she proposed "the founding of a professional Canadian theatre company, subsidized by nationwide membership, the actors to be contributed through selection from the Little Theatres, whose primary function would then be consummated in unsevered and continuous interest." <sup>76</sup> The work of this company would be to tour Canada in the first instance, followed by, "the United States, England and the Empire generally." <sup>77</sup>

The project was never realised. Within a year the DDF started and very quickly it seemed as if the whole of Canadian theatre was on the move. "A hundred theatre groups," says Lord Bessborough, founder of the DDF, describing the initial commitment, "had....competed in local Festivals in the Provinces and as a result of elimination, twenty-four English and French-speaking groups came to Ottawa. They represented all Provinces, and included groups from both Halifax and Vancouver." <sup>78</sup> He reminds readers of the British newspaper,

in which his observations were first printed, that these cities are over three thousand miles apart, and points out the problems posed by such geography. "The most distant groups had to travel four days and four nights by train in order to take part in the Festival."<sup>79</sup>

Travel on a continental scale was indeed happening, though not in the form envisaged in Allan's dream of an exportable National Theatre. Yet even while she speculated on the nation's theatrical future, her thoughts were never far from the practical problems of MRT's forthcoming production. She was familiar, as are all theatre managers, with the fact that you have to make do with whom and what you have at hand. Each day you face "the grinding ordeal of trying to present an adequate performance."<sup>80</sup> Allan never wavered in her efforts to maintain excellence regardless of the difficulties of the moment.

After the founding of MRT she was to be responsible for productions that regularly achieved much more than a merely "adequate performance." She died in 1942, aged 47, having seen her company weather the storms of the Depression. Other Supervising Directors would try to fill her shoes, none of them blessed with her unique combination of talent, drive and bi-cultural outlook. All these qualities would be sorely missed in the years to come. Yet Martha Allan was not indispensable; without her the MRT would continue to flourish for a further nineteen years.

\* \* \*

### Chapter Three

#### The Martha Allan Years: Union St Studio: 1930-1942

##### Opening Production: March 1930

The Theatre Guild of Montreal presented its first production in Moyse Hall of McGill University on 26 March 1930 for five performances. The play was A.A.Milne's, The Perfect Alibi, a mystery drama in which Martha Allan played the female lead, and also directed with the assistance of Rupert Caplan. Two professionals were included in the cast: J.W.Austin, who had been in Granville Barker's A Midsummer Night's Dream at London's Savoy Theatre in 1914, and Maurice Wells, who had worked in New York for two years with the Theatre Guild, and had been Associate Director and leading man at the Pasadena Community Playhouse.

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The Gazette's anonymous critic was as enthusiastic about the production as were the patrons: "A large and fashionable audience set the stamp of its approval on the production by its warm and unstinted applause." The image of that "fashionable" audience would plague the company throughout its existence, despite the sincere efforts of members to make welcome everyone who wished to work with them. In a lengthy article at the week's end the Gazette reviewed the many efforts made previously to create a theatre for all Montrealers, and hoped that the Theatre Guild would "in time supply a long-felt need--independence from outside sources for our theatrical fare."

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In general the critic found the company's standards satisfactory:

From start to finish there was a smoothness not always found in professional productions. There was apparent to the observant theatregoer a unity of aim, a co-operation in which personal ambition was submerged to the advantage of the ensemble. If the Guild continues on the plan on which it started it is safe to predict that Montreal need not worry much about what New York or London or any other theatrical centre sends us.

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### MONTREAL REPERTORY THEATRE

#### First Season: 1930-1931

After the success of the opening production enthusiastic preparations began for a presentation of Candida by George Bernard Shaw. The company was moving from a merely popular writer to one who was significant. Their long-term intention to do works by Shaw forced them to make a serious decision about the company's name. So patrons of the second production found a new name on their program. Turning as they were instructed to the back cover they found the following explanation:

THEATRE GUILD OF MONTREAL, INC., announces that it will apply for Supplementary Letters Patent to change its name to "Montreal Repertory Theatre, Inc." This change is necessary owing to urgent requests from the New York Theatre Guild, which, under a by-law of its organization cannot release productions controlled by it to any group bearing

the title "Theatre Guild."

While primarily the New York Theatre Guild has the sole right to such name only in the United States, considerable importance is attached to there being no organization with a similar name in Canada.

It will be remembered that the New York Theatre Guild controls the production of all the plays of George Bernard Shaw, and the rights to Candida are obtained from it. The New York Theatre Guild is at the forefront of groups in New York which annually produce new plays, and it is the expectation of the Management that through the Montreal organization some of these will, from time to time, be made available to playgoers here.

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Candida was a work whose place in the international theatre repertoire had been assured since its first appearance in 1903. Martha Allan brought considerable strength and vigor to playing the title role.

The second production of the new season, and the first production under the company's new name, was Somerset Maugham's The Constant Wife. Martha Allan took the lead in this sprightly dissection of realistic love and the independent modern woman. Maugham's reputation as a dramatist was long established, and the play had been a hit on its first production in New York in 1926 and later in London.

With three conventional productions to its credit, the company made a first venture into non-realistic theatre. Karel Capek's R.U.R., with its individualistic examination of

man's condition, rapidly brought Capek from Czech obscurity to the forefront of the world's stage. Performed in New York in 1922, only a year after being written, R.U.R. came as something of a shock to the fashionable Montreal audience which had given "warm and unstinted applause"<sup>86</sup> to the group's opening production. The MRT was serving notice to Montrealers that theatre, especially the experimental work contemplated, was not merely the representation on stage of their own comfortable domestic routines.

February's production addressed another of the founder's concerns—the virtual absence of French theatre in the city. The piece chosen to remedy this situation was the Amiel/Obey collaboration, La Souriante Madame Beaudet. Martha Allan in the leading role brought to the part "her beautiful speaking voice and perfect French accent."<sup>87</sup> This work had originally been presented on the Paris stage in 1921. The Gazette reviewer did not much care for the play but congratulated the company because it "realizes its limitations and chooses plays that will not overtax its histrionic strength."<sup>88</sup> We learn something of the modest expectations of theatregoers when in the same review it is mentioned that the prompter's services were not needed, "so well did the company know their lines."<sup>89</sup>

This first season ended with a well-known name from the British stage. Galsworthy's The Roof, first produced in London in late 1929, received its Canadian première in March 1931. Montreal audiences could not complain that they lacked up-to-date theatrical fare. The Roof, however, (unlike Strife,

Justice, and The Silver Box) was not vintage Galsworthy. In the first signed review published by the Gazette, Thomas Archer finds fault with the play itself but lauds the company. "MRT deserves credit for making this into an evening's entertainment," he concluded. <sup>90</sup>

Rounding off the season was a bit of private fun in Moyses Hall on Wednesday, 20 May, for members only. Sir Andrew Macphail, who helped engineer the first visit of the Horniman company nearly twenty years previously, had one of his one-act plays performed by Martha Allan, Rupert Caplan and Viscount Duncannon. The latter, an accomplished actor and son of Lord Bessborough, the Governor-General, would in the following year play the lead in MRT's Hamlet. The evening included a one-act play in French by Sacha Guitry. A final and patrician touch was given by the presence of Sir Arthur Currie, leader of Canada's troops in the First World War, and at this time Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University, who delivered a congratulatory address to the members of MRT.

Martha Allan, in her capacity as Supervising Director, concentrated on the need to enlarge the membership. The speed with which the New York Theatre Guild had expanded provided a standard against which other new theatres could measure their growth rate. The first MRT season had shown that Montreal was ready to support a non-professional theatre which drew on the best talents of all the city's performing groups. Each play was given four or five performances, except for the French play which was given twice. The MRT presented

this work in Westmount's Victoria Hall. Smaller than the 400 seat Moyse Hall, this venue would see many of the company's productions in the years to come. Despite this vigorous start to its activities MRT received a jolt from the Gazette in an end-of-season article titled "Is Montreal Theatre Minded?" The burden of the article (described by the writer as "an examination of conscience") is to accuse Montrealers of neglecting the theatre and forcing touring companies to assume unfair risks. He sees some hope for the future in the intended tour of Sir Barry Jackson's company, which if successful might persuade other companies to undertake Canada-wide tours. But the MRT's pretensions to professional standards, and its hopes of emulating the successes of the New York Theatre Guild, are nowhere mentioned. <sup>91</sup> MRT at the end of its first full season still had to prove that it had arrived to stay.

#### 1931-1932: Second Season

The second season opened in November 1931 with a production in Moyse Hall of Luigi Chiarelli's The Mask and the Face directed by the by now familiar team of Allan and Caplan. This 'grotesque' comedy was the first of several by the writer whose abstract characters and bizarre plots established at the time (1916) what amounted to a new genre of dramatic writing. In selecting this script the MRT was moving rapidly away from the familiar. The Governor-General and his lady graced the opening night with their presence. In the cast we can note the future playwright Wilfred Werry, and Ferdinand Biondi, who would soon have significance in

Montreal's French theatre as first Director of the MRT's Section Française.

A new development for the next show was a joint production with Ottawa Little Theatre. Each company presented half the double bill which ran for four days in Ottawa followed by two days in Montreal. The MRT next gave C.B.Fernald's Chinese melodrama, The Cat and the Cherub, which had been popular in Britain some years previously, with a cast including young Duncannon and a set designed by the Governor-General. The Gazette's critic was pleased by the idea of co-productions with companies in other cities and considered this a healthy way of avoiding the danger of players growing stale. "Proper local patriotism may lead to their becoming a mutual admiration society."<sup>92</sup>

January brought Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine--an expressionistic drama about the little man in a depersonalising world. Rupert Caplan had already directed this play in Montreal in the spring of 1930 for the Y.W.H.A.<sup>93</sup> In the cast were two actors still active some fifty years later: Hume Cronyn, internationally-known stage and television actor, and Dorothy Davis, joint director of the Children's Theatre of Montreal. A comedy by Harwood, The Man In Possession, starring Martha Allan, was the last major production of the season. Again the Governor-General and Lady Bessborough graced the opening night with their presence.

While MRT satisfied its commitment to entertain the patrons another serious task was being undertaken--that of

promoting Canadian writing in English and French. In May MRT Workshop Theatre presented two evenings of one-act plays in Moyse Hall with Cecil West as General Director. Three plays were presented each evening. Of a total of six plays--two in French, and four in English, only one was by a non-Canadian author. Writers included S.Morgan-Powell, theatre critic of the Montreal Star, Sir Andrew Macphail, Professor of the History of Medicine at McGill University and Vice-President of MRT, and Henri Letondal, a writer, who was to have a busy future in Montreal theatre.

#### 1932-1933: Third Season

The Third Season was heralded by a neatly printed prospectus in which the company listed some innovations. A system of season subscriptions for members was to be tried in the hope that membership would increase and thereby reduce the cost of individual tickets. Another proposal, headed 'MISS ALLAN'S OUTSIDE PRODUCTIONS,' is given detailed explanation:

When world-famous artists are brought to Montreal they require pecuniary guarantees and consequently there are considerable risks involved for their backers. Since MRT cannot at present assume such responsibilities, Miss Allan has undertaken to be personally responsible for any loss that may be incurred in the financing of such OUTSIDE PRODUCTIONS. Any profits that may be made from them (after losses, if any, have been made up) will go to MRT.

Allan's promise of potential profits for the support of MRT is a good indicator of the strength of her interest in this project. Already she had volunteered the stables of her palatial home as a rehearsal space. The last piece of good news in the pamphlet was the announcement of a permanent address for the company at 1461 Union Avenue.

Thomas Archer went to scout the premises for his readers and discovered "an immense room covering the entire floor of the building. Some idea of its size may be gained by the knowledge that it was formerly used as an indoor golf course." <sup>95</sup> The space was partly partitioned off to make special areas for costume and scenery design, and for an art school.

The plan was to perform all experimental work on the studio floor itself. Conversion to studio use was well under way, as were rehearsals for four Canadian plays. Moyse Hall remained the venue for major productions, where the season opened as in the previous year with a tested modern masterpiece from the European theatre. Bruno Frank's Twelve Thousand, first written and staged in Berlin in 1926, offers a historical drama with North American implications, set in the Germany of Frederick the Great. The costuming was realistic while Richard Eve supplied an Expressionistic set.

Hamlet followed in December with full imperial panoply. The Prince was played by Viscount Duncannon--"a dashing and romantic figure." The set was designed by the Earl of Bessborough. The Vice-Regal couple attended not one but two opening nights as the production was post-Christmas

entertainment in both Ottawa and Montreal. While the production was advertised as a joint venture of the MRT/Ottawa Little Theatre, casting was representative of Canadian Little Theatre as a whole with players drawn from Toronto and Winnipeg as well.

Meanwhile work in the Studio proceeded apace. Before the next major production four first-time authors of Canadian plays in English--Edward Devlin, Harry Donald, Leslie Stone and Cecil West--had experienced the reception of their work by an audience. On the French side, Studio productions of works by Robert Choquette, Léopold Houlé and Michel Seymour had taken place, first in the Studio itself and in January before a public audience at the New Plateau School in Lafontaine Park.

March saw Noé by André Obey done in French as a joint production with Les Anciens de Gesù. The play was new, having received its first production in Paris in 1931 at Copeau's Vieux-Colombier theatre. The Montreal audience was somewhat taken aback by Obey's light-hearted treatment of a hitherto sacred subject. Obtaining the venue--the Salle Academique of Collège Ste. Marie--was in itself a coup for Martha Allan; this hall had been traditionally considered a special centre for French drama in Montreal. Yvette Ollivier Mercier-Gouin, playwright daughter of Quebec's Lieutenant-Governor, was a member of the cast. Assisting Martha Allan in the direction was Pacifique Plante, at this time a young lawyer, whose career would shift him in the 'fifties from the entertainment

section of the city's newspapers to the front pages as Mayor Jean Drapeau's gang-busting police chief.

The company's vigour knew no limits. A Studio production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night was so well-received in March that pressure from members caused it to be presented to the public as a major production in Moyses Hall the following month. The season ended with an early George Kaufman comedy, Dulcy, written with Marc Connelly in 1921 and still sparkling with unsentimental wit and wisecracks. Charles Rittenhouse, who would become a giant in Montreal's educational and theatre worlds (and who was still working with MRT in 1961), made his first appearance in a cast-list in December, 1932, as the lead in Ghéon's The Miraculous History of St. Bernard, directed by Cecil West. In the spring of 1933 Martha Allan lost her fellow-founder. Rupert Caplan left to become Producing Director of the newly-formed Montreal Theatre League, a professional Little Theatre which made use of His Majesty's Theatre while the company existed.

#### 1933-1934: Fourth Season

Several innovations were promised for the 1933-1934 season. There would be a monthly publication, modelled on the magazine of the New York Theatre Guild, to keep members abreast of all company activities. CUE began as a broadsheet, turned into a magazine, and survived in the company's latter days as part of the play programmes. Membership fees were reduced and new subscriptions aggressively sought. A Junior Playhouse was introduced to give theatre courses and

laboratory experience for children and adult actors. This educational mission was to continue throughout the lifetime of the company; for many years it provided Montrealers with virtually the only formal theatre education available to those too old to profit from the Children's Theatre.

The fourth season opened with the first Ibsen Montreal had seen for seven years. Martha Allan's portrayal of Hedda Gabler was sensational enough to have the production invited to Toronto's Hart House Theatre. Thomas Archer was delighted to find the company at last ready to try an "acting" play. The Constant Wife of 1930 was their last such attempt, and in Archer's opinion that had been about as bad as it could be. The experience had caused MRT to drop, "'acting' plays" according to the critic, "and confine itself to light comedies, expressionistic drama and costume plays for the space of nearly three years...three years of conservative, elementary work has literally put M.R.T. on its feet." <sup>96</sup>

Priestley's Dangerous Corner followed Hedda Gabler. Another psychological drama, it offered the added attraction of having been a West End and Broadway hit the previous season. The Christmas show, Romeo and Juliet, staged jointly with the Ottawa Drama League, brought in talent from Kingston and Toronto as well as Ottawa and Montreal. Duncannon played Romeo; his father designed the set; Hart House provided the costumes. A British producer, Rupert Harvey, who was in Canada as Regional Adjudicator for the Dominion Drama Festival, directed the play which was so popular that extra chairs had to be brought in.

Rollicking comedy lightened the season's earlier sombreness. J.H. Turner's Lilies of the Field and Gogol's Inspector General achieved the expected effect, though Romney Brent's The Mad Hopes proved no more than mildly amusing. The Drunkard, concluding the season, extended the company's activities in the direction of an even lighter kind of entertainment. This classic nineteenth-century melodrama was part of a program which included singing, dancing and "An Ambrosial Marine Extravaganza." Refreshments were served to the audience as they sat in the Garden of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. The production, coming as it did after a string of comedies, seems to suggest that the company was starting to equate good theatre with good box-office.

The MRT was by this time accepted as a significant institution in Montreal's theatrical life. As well as maintaining the annual series of major productions for the public, members of the company were experimenting on their own account with interesting novelties. In October 1933, at an evening of one-act plays by Montreal critics, Thomas Archer presented Three Characters in Search of a Plot; David Legate was responsible for Critics on the Hearth; and Leon Edel contributed Un Cocktail de Trop. The evening was presided over by E. Morgan-Powell, theatre critic of the Montreal Star. After the plays the actors turned critic and reviewed (charitably) the efforts of their accustomed adversaries. Other activities at the end of 1933 include three plays--two French and one English--for a Studio audience, and the

performance of three original English scripts submitted in the MRT Play Contest.

Interest in the developing Dominion Drama Festival was not surprising, given Martha Allan's close involvement with that organisation. MRT sent two plays to the Ottawa Finals in April 1933--Les Deux Couverts by Sacha Guitry, directed by Martha Allan, and All on a Summer's Day--a one-act written by Allan herself. The former was commended by the Adjudicator; Allan's play received the Barry Jackson Trophy for the best Canadian play.

Studio productions regularly leave traces of their passage in the records, though not in a systematic way. In April Edwyn Wayte produced three one-act plays--Barbara's Wedding, The Dear Departed and Lithuania. In May the work of the School of the Theatre, which had opened eight months previously, bore fruit in two studio productions. Other evenings of French and English plays featured a lively version of O'Neill's The Hairy Ape and Letondal's three-act comedy, Le Cheval de Course, in which young Gratien Gélinas--then selling life insurance--took the leading role. <sup>97</sup> This year the company offered a summer theatre programme and for a busy week at the end of July mounted two hits from the season just ended--The Drunkard and Lilies of the Field. The venue for this work was the fashionable Manoir Richelieu at Murray Bay. Mr. Archer links culture and class in his comment: "In addition to its importance as an experiment in summer theatre in Canada, the Manoir Richelieu drama festival will be one of the social highlights on the summer program at this exclusive

summer resort." <sup>98</sup> It provided the expected highlight. The Vice-Regal couple attended one of the performances, disembarking for their visit from the official Vice-Regal yacht. There were good grounds for Charles Rittenhouse to recollect thirty years later that MRT of the 'thirties was a "patronage" theatre, characterized by a "white-tie audience." <sup>99</sup>

#### 1934-1935: Fifth Season

In the fall the Gazette printed a letter to Martha Allan from a noted playwright and critic concerning the prospects for a lasting theatre. "Keep your weight in the collar," advised St John Ervine, "and you'll work a theatre in Montreal. But for goodness sake don't let it get cranky. Keep it the theatre of a community and not the theatre of a clique."  
100

Allan was not unaware of the risks of her social connections, but her business was to run her theatre. To open the season in the Studio Shaw's The Dark Lady of the Sonnets was paired with Allan's All on a Summer's Day. Following this came Ashley Dukes' comedy, The Man with a Load of Mischief, which was first produced by London's Stage Society before being taken up by a West End theatre. Lorna Sheard of Toronto's Hart House joined the company for this play. Eleanor Nichol (Stuart), first seen with MRT in the previous season, had played in this work at London's Haymarket theatre for two years, and now took the lead in Montreal. Evidently the MRT was becoming an attraction for out-of-town talent. The group's next challenge was a

Studio revival of the first three of five parts of Shaw's gargantuan drama, Back to Methuselah. When the Theatre Guild of New York, the original producers, asked Shaw for a contract allowing them to perform the work, he replied: "A contract is unnecessary. It isn't likely that any other lunatics will want to produce it." <sup>101</sup> Lunatic or not, MRT could not afford to do the last parts of the play because Shaw's royalties were too high. <sup>102</sup> Martha Allan led her company in a brisk dash from the Garden of Eden to the office of the President of the British Isles in 2170 A.D.

Rachel Crothers' New York comedy success, When Ladies Meet, had its Broadway opening in 1932 and was presented by MRT three years later. By this time the Ritz-Carlton hotel had become a second home for the MRT since Moyse Hall was no longer regularly available. In May The Merry Wives of Windsor was played with a large cast including Gratien Gélinas--working in English--as he would do again in the 'fifties as Dr Caius in the same play at the Stratford Festival.

A melodrama based on Uncle Tom's Cabin closed the season on a highly successful note. On the same bill was a Concert with Tiller Girls chorus. Obviously the partying of the previous summer's Drunkard had set an attractive precedent. The demand for seats was so great that two additional performances had to be scheduled. This was the end of the season's festivities, however. There were no summer performances. Not until Saint Joan was presented in August 1954 as part of the

Montreal Summer Festivals would there be another off-season production by the MRT.

1935-1936: Sixth Season

Season Six began with comedy. The Wind and the Rain by Merton Hodges showed student life in Edinburgh to a very satisfied audience and broke all box-office records. Then followed a production set much further afield--Morris Gest's English version of the Chinese play Lady Precious Stream, with Marjorie Brewer in the title role. This was the first time the piece had been performed in North America. For years afterwards reviewers recalled the exotic spectacle as a high point in the MRT's daring enterprise. Griffith Brewer, a veteran of the company, saw the play as a youth and more than fifty years later clearly remembered the striking set designed by Herbert Whittaker.<sup>103</sup> Whittaker's own recollections of the production include unhappiness that his designs were replaced by authentic Chinese costumes provided by the Kuomintang. Furthermore "the backlit screen setting I designed was vulgarized, I thought, by casting silhouettes on it to locate the action."<sup>104</sup> Thomas Archer was not impressed. In retrospect he concluded that Lady Precious Stream "could not be called an unqualified success....there was also an 'arty' air about the whole thing that made one prefer an honest show like Post Road."<sup>105</sup> This popular comedy-thriller by Steel and Mitchell, fresh from the previous Broadway season, followed John Drinkwater's comedy, Bird in Hand.

The year's DDF entry, Clifford Odets' Waiting For Lefty,

was also hot from New York. Rose Kashton, then working for the Progressive Arts Club and Montreal's New Theatre Group, was taken aback by the treatment this left-wing propaganda play received at the hands of MRT:

The first shock was to see Edna, wife of the striking taxi driver, dressed in a beautiful English tweed skirt and a very lovely pure silk blouse. I remember it to this day. In this outfit she was speaking bitterly to her husband about their poverty! It was incredible to see this production and hear Odets' down-to-earth lines spoken in deliberately-cultivated English accents. <sup>106</sup>

The same play produced by Vancouver's P.A.C. won the top DDF award that year. Most of the actors were unemployed and on relief. They gave additional performances of the play to raise money so they could attend the Ottawa finals.

The English accents which offended Kashton are something of a mystery. The company had a number of members from England at this period--the Hessey-White's (Cyril, Cicely and daughter Gillian), Whitfield Aston and Basil Dignam--but none of them was involved in this production. They had an undoubted influence on the company, as did Roeberta Beatty and Filmore Sadler on the American side. "With Martha Allan drawing on her Pasadena training," notes Whittaker, "they were responsible for the MRT's acting style which might well be characterized as 'mid-Atlantic.'" <sup>107</sup>

The season ended with comedy: Frederick Jackson's The Bishop Misbehaves at Victoria Hall, and at the Ritz-

Carlton Walter Reynolds' Young England. At the latter MRT's fashionable audience enjoyed dainty refreshments while watching the pampered world of Britain's aristocratic youth. Kashton's words concerning contemporary Montreal provide an instructive counterpoint from the world of the Depression:

The social and political climate was grim of course. Unemployment was rife. The hold of the Catholic church on the vast majority of the population was just about total. Any struggle in terms of demands for any kind of relief was viciously put down.

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Victoria Hall and the Ritz-Carlton continued as theatres for major productions while the Studio was used for works expected to have less popular appeal. The School of the Theatre, under the guidance of Filmore and Marjorie Sadler, had started to show results in this its third year. During the winter more than a hundred students took courses. Stella Sprowell and other graduates found roles in a number of important plays during the season. And with its production of The Dark Lady of the Sonnets MRT won First Prize in the Regional D.D.F. competition. But all was not well. Plays were chosen largely because they had been successful elsewhere and the regular audience seemed best-pleased with lighter fare. Looking to the future it seemed for a time that a new theatre might be in sight. Herbert Whittaker recalls the circumstances:

By 1934, the City of Westmount offered a site on which MRT could build. Associated with Martha

Allan in trying to create this new theatre were Howard Murray, president of the Aldred Company, John McConnell, publisher of the Montreal Star, Geoffrey Hedges and the senior Allans. Two banks, The Bank of Montreal and The Royal Bank, were sympathetic.

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Meetings were held and guarantees given; but by 1936 the appropriate time seemed to have passed.

Given the size of the Montreal audience it was obvious that the growth rate of the New York Theatre Guild had left Martha Allan's company far behind. The first task of the new season would be to try to raise the membership to one thousand.

#### 1936-1937: Seventh Season

A publicity pamphlet announcing the Seventh Season gives details of the Membership Campaign Committee and addresses potential but laggard members with a stern voice:

Recognized as Montreal's foremost theatrical organization, the MRT is filling a definite need in the life of the city, particularly in view of the almost complete dearth of visiting companies, and therefore should merit the support and consideration of all who have any interest in the spoken drama.

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The opening production was to be James Warwick's Blind Alley at the Ritz-Carlton. This New York success of the previous year laid bare the psychology of a gangster. An enticing list of fifteen possible plays was printed from which five would be chosen, though in the end only one made

it to the stage, and productions in German would be added to the program. Noel Coward's 1925 Hay Fever allowed a team of MRT veterans--Martha Allan, Filmore Sadler, Cyril Hessey-White and Joy Lafleur--to disport themselves merrily in Cecil West's English country house setting. Of more lasting interest was a non-commercial production of the Chester Mysteries given at Christmas in the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, after first being seen in the Studio some months earlier. For the public presentation a tower was built over the chancel together with a magnificent shrine for the Virgin and Child. No programs were printed, and the players remained anonymous by choice. MRT on occasion could set aside the entertainment aspect of its mission to put its talents freely at the service of the local community.

Priestley's "immoral" comedy, Laburnum Grove, had been the London hit of 1933, and in the new year introduced Montreal to an improbably respectable counterfeiter. Edward Wooll's Libel, a recent success in London and New York, treated the law more respectfully and proved one of the most successful productions to date. The reviewers unanimously acknowledged the professional production standards seen in this work. The hectic action of Mark Reed's comedy, Petticoat Fever, took place in a wireless station on the North Coast of Labrador. The successful season ended at the Ritz-Carlton with the usual summer romp. This time the company presented a prophetically-named revue--All At Sea--which looked forward to the wartime Navy Show which would draw heavily on MRT talent. In the Gazette's review of the year, the company and public were told

yet again that a theatre was needed, and that if a new building was out of the question they should imitate the Ottawa Drama League and find some place they could convert. Statistics for the seventh season indicate that there had been 100 performances of 43 plays. Three of these plays were in French, three in German, and seven were original Canadian plays. Nearly two hundred actors had appeared on stage. <sup>111</sup> A Playwriting Group had been formed by Mada Gage Bolton. Springing from this work Wilfred Werry's play, Breakfast, was produced by Herbert Whittaker in the studio in October; the following month Filmore Sadler directed original one-act plays by Joseph Schull and Mrs R. Campbell Scott at the Royal Victoria College under the sponsorship of the University Women's Club.

Three sections of MRT entered plays for the Dominion Drama Festival. The Section Française offered La Lumière Dans le Tombeau by René Berton. Joseph Schull saw his work, The Eleventh Hour, presented by the Studio Group. Suppressed Desires by Susan Glaspell, a classic from the Provincetown Players' Wharf Theatre days of 1915-1916, was the main MRT entry.

Looking back over a year which had started with a membership of 1,128, one can note vigorous activity and an increasingly wide range of undertakings. The box-office showed more evidence of popular support. During the summer members lent their talents to the newly-formed Open Air Theatre in Lachine. Martha Allan's "umbrella" company, which in 1929 drew upon the skills of other, perhaps less ambitious,

operations, now constituted a prime talent pool in all areas of theatrical expertise.

1937-1938: Eighth Season

Thomas Archer, anticipating the new season, advised MRT to continue giving the public what it wanted, namely good entertainment, and to postpone experiments until they had their own building and a healthy bank balance. <sup>112</sup> Meanwhile the company arranged to rent more space in the building next door to the Studio so that the original space could be used exclusively for productions. Another membership campaign (which would bring the numbers up to 1,250) was under way. While the School of the Theatre continued for young people, a Senior Studio group was formed to study Advanced Theory of Drama and to stage experimental productions. This work was supervised by Alvina Hackel, who had studied with Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre.

Ivor Novello's 1934 comedy, Fresh Fields, brought the popular British aristocracy back on stage again. Judgement Day by Elmer Rice followed. The original 1934 failure of this play in New York was more than made up for by its enthusiastic London reception in 1937. This melodramatic anti-war play had a message which, in the turbulent late 'thirties in Europe, was more readily acceptable on the eastern side of the Atlantic. Christmas brought a repetition of the Chester Mysteries in church. In the New Year John Van Druten's comedy, The Distaff Side, brought humour from a conventional middle-class world to the stage, while The Amazing Dr Clitterhouse,

fresh from the previous season in London and New York, gave its audience the thrill of vicarious crime. The rest of the season was solidly British with Frederick Lonsdale's upper class comedy--On Approval--and an adaptation of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. Martha Allan's portrayal of the 'dreadful martinet,' Lady Catherine de Bourgh, was highly praised; indeed there was the muted suggestion that the actress found something of her off-stage self in the role.

The box office was hugely successful in this season. Montreal audiences were obviously well-pleased with the undemanding fare on offer. To note the lack of challenge is not to take away from the professionalism of the productions. No actors were paid, yet many of them had been practising professionals in other places, and were maintaining their income in Montreal with fees for radio broadcasts. While the core administrative staff was salaried, crew and support workers remained volunteers. All were striving for professional excellence in what was presented to the public; according to the critics, this level was regularly attained.

In addition to the program of major productions other activities abounded. We discover novelties such as a lecture by Professor Hermann Walter on Ibsen's Ghosts illustrated by episodes performed by students from the School of the Theatre. Martha Allan sponsored Un Homme by Yvette Mercier-Gouin at His Majesty's Theatre in a production by Henri Letondal. Both these names had strong MRT connections from earlier years.

Ferdinand Biondi says that this production also travelled to Paris with pleasing success.<sup>113</sup> MRT in November 1937 performed at the "Normandie Roof" of the Mount Royal Hotel --the most celebrated night spot in town--when Lady Adèle's Diary was presented at four in the afternoon as part of the annual Book Fair. The Section Française staged two plays in the Sun Life Auditorium in March before going on to win the Sir Barry Jackson Trophy with Maldonne by Arthur Prévost as the Best Canadian Play in the DDF. Thomas Archer's annual report on the company for 1938 stated outright that MRT needed to be more ambitious. "A theatre which does not at some time or other reach for the moon is in danger of being engulfed."<sup>114</sup>

As part of Montreal's expanding summer theatre many MRT members supported a second annual Open Air Theatre production in great numbers. The cast of Shakespeare's Henry VIII ran to more than a hundred players, and the popularity was such that two extra performances had to be added. MRT in the summer of 1938 could boast of a subscription list which had increased to 1,450. While moving in the right direction, the total looked dismal when compared with the New York Theatre Guild's record. W.P. Eaton records that "when the Fifth Season opened, in October 1922, the Guild had 6,000 subscribers."<sup>115</sup> While taking into account the difference in size of the populations, it must be noted that MRT had taken twice as long to reach less than a quarter of that total.

#### 1938-1939: Ninth Season

Not visibly discouraged by these statistics, or by

disturbances in Europe such as the Spanish Civil War and Hitler's takeover of Austria, the MRT opened its season with Bridie's version of Storm in a Teacup, in which a "would-be Scottish Hitler" was satirised. Love From A Stranger, adapted from an Agatha Christie thriller, took the audience back to the familiar Home Counties, and was followed by a glimpse of Algernon Moncrieff's flat in Central London. The Importance of Being Earnest inspired the company. It was "the right play and the right cast," enthused Thomas Archer. "One of the best the MRT has offered during the nine years it has been before the public." <sup>116</sup> While Earnest played in Montreal it was also to be seen in New York, with MRT veteran Helen Trenholme in the part of Gwendolen. In February Cecil West and John Ready were responsible for a Studio production of Macbeth in which Douglas Peterson played the lead. The next production was a breakthrough; Father Malachy's Miracle was MRT's first full-length play by a Canadian author. This work by lawyer and part-time Hart House actor, Brian Doherty, who adapted Bruce Marshall's novel, established its credentials with a Broadway success in the previous year. Frederick Lonsdale (Aren't We All?) and Noel Coward (Private Lives) brought the extremely popular season to an end with polished presentations of sophisticated comedies making fun of England's leisured classes. This period of concentration on Britain was unequalled in the history of MRT. The works were perhaps chosen with some presentiment of the horrors about to engulf that centre of civilisation. In all fourteen plays had been presented since the Fall. The

School of the Theatre was responsible for a number of these. Their productions of Uncle Vanya and Stage Door give some idea of the range of talent being developed overall by MRT. The Gazette estimated that as many as 3,500 patrons paid for admission to each major production, and described the company as "the best-equipped non-professional theatre in Canada."<sup>117</sup>

Again there was talk of premises worthy of the company's potential. In 1939 the City of Westmount promised land for the construction of a theatre and studio space with a forty-year tax free lease.<sup>118</sup> This project, like so many others contemplated that year, was summarily brought to an end by world events.

Martha Allan's holiday job took her to the Chalet on Mount Royal where she directed a mammoth outdoor production in French of Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac with a cast numbering around 150. This August production signalled the end of peacetime theatre for Montreal. In September 1939, the second major war of the century threw Europe and the civilised world into turmoil.

#### 1939-1940: Tenth Season

The MRT continued its regular productions throughout the six years of war, and set itself a brisk pace in war work and troop entertainment as well. (See Chapter 4.) This tenth year began with a noted Studio production by Charles Rittenhouse, recently appointed as Supervisor of Drama for the Montreal School Board after two years at Yale's School of Drama. The play, Liliom, by Ferenc Molnar, had taken thirty years to

reach Montreal since its disappointing start in Budapest, though it had received favourable acclaim and many performances since being taken up by the New York Theatre Guild in 1921. This mixture of naturalism and mystical symbolism would, five years later, find itself transformed into a huge popular success as the musical Carousel. The first major production brought Martha Allan back to the boards in Savory's comedy, George and Margaret, mounted in Victoria Hall. December's Family Portrait brought Christ and his mother to the stage. A particular episode from this success of the previous Broadway season stayed vividly in the memory of one spectator:

Mary had been seated talking pleasantly to an unknown young man. Her sons burst in with indignant and amazed descriptions of the crowds gathered to hear her Son. Eagerly and proudly she turned warmly to the young stranger and introduced him to each of her sons in turn. With smiling easy grace she said, "I'm sorry, I don't know your name." The young man rose from his seat and replied with natural simplicity, "Judas, Judas Iscariot." The second of absolute silence before the curtain fell was like a flash into eternity.

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Maugham's comedy The Circle was the first MRT play to be directed by John Hoare, whose urgings as a student writer had resulted in the Horniman tour of 1913. This mature work, examining two love triangles a generation apart, offered a serious commentary on the relations between men and women. A

spring production of Bernard Merivale's The Unguarded Hour took the company back to Britain for an escapist thriller with titled characters. Something of the sombreness of contemporary newspapers was brought into the theatre by a production of Irwin Shaw's The Gentle People, which had been premiered in New York by The Group in the previous season. The play demonstrated how otherwise harmless people can be driven to take desperate measures when their survival is at stake.

The season's final major production marked the first occasion that MRT's specially-formed company for troop entertainment--The Tin Hats--performed for the general public. The Windsor Hotel Ballroom was packed on four nights for the Tin Hat Review with a cast including John Pratt, Robert Goodier and Lionel Murton. These three men would soon embark on professional careers as wartime entertainers. As in the end-of-season Revues of the last few years there was a mixture of popular songs and fast-moving skits--many of them written by the performers--together with chorus line and speciality acts. Unwittingly the company had been equipping itself to provide the staples of the Tin Hats' shows. Unlike other Montreal companies they were able to turn directly to this kind of work as soon as the need was seen.

In spite of the demand on resources made by the Tin Hats and the major productions, other work continued. The Studio offered a number of "Favourite Scenes from Shakespeare" which included extracts from The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado, As You Like It and The Taming of the Shrew. MRT's

Section Française was responsible in December 1939 for a lecture on the History of Theatre in New France at which the company performed a reconstruction of Canada's first dramatic production--Lescarbot's Le Théâtre de Neptune en Nouvelle France. February brought a revival of Private Lives from the previous season which used the original cast. The occasion was a fundraiser to benefit the Comforts Fund of the Royal Montreal Regiment. March saw John Hoare active as producer of "Three OneAct Plays by Montrealers." This production which ran for three nights, offered plays by Janet McPhee and Mada Gage Bolton, together with The Shoemakers of Syracuse by Hoare, the first part of a full-length play which MRT would stage in 1944. The School of the Theatre continued, and offered one-act plays to an audience in May.

Although world conditions were changing rapidly, MRT was able to adapt and provide its public with what they had come to expect. Archer's estimate of the total audience for major productions in the season was around 17,000, a figure similar to that of the previous year.<sup>120</sup> Yet when we compare this with the work of the Tin Hats--an organization which had not existed twelve months previously--it is astonishing to learn that in their first year they had performed before more than 20,000 servicemen. Obviously the armed forces could learn something from these civilians about the speedy mobilization of talent.

#### 1940-1941: Eleventh Season

Planning for the Eleventh Season took place in real wartime conditions, not the "phoney" war of the previous

wartime conditions, not the "phoney" war of the previous September. In these circumstances the choice of light material was not unexpected. We find Lesley Howard's farce, Murray Hill along with the classic farce, Rookery Nook, by Ben Travers. Ivor Novello's comedy, Full House, came before another light entertainment--The Tin Hat Review of 1941. The earlier production was entirely re-written and re-costumed to prepare for the coming season on the road. MRT's work had become a never-ending, year-round production schedule. In the regular season the most interesting item was the fall production of Maxwell Anderson's blank verse drama, Mary of Scotland. This excursion into the history of Britain added some perspective to that country's current problems. The nation had known trouble before: in the sixteenth century there had been decades of Papist Plots and menaces by Spain, as well as the personal threat to Queen Elizabeth engendered by Mary's very existence. Anderson put on stage an interview between the two queens, (which never took place in life,) and ended his play with powerless Mary's heroic defiance of Elizabeth's strength. The encounter was an object lesson in courage for a country whose capital city in November 1940 was being set aflame nightly by an airborne Armada.

Despite the war MRT did its utmost to proceed with regular business. The Studio in April mounted a production of Martine by Jean-Jacques Bernard which was directed by John Hoare. The following month students from the School of the Theatre publicly presented several one-act plays, including

the novelty of a mime play directed by Irene Almond. With Novello's Full House Montreal audiences unknowingly saw Martha Allan on stage for the last time, and witnessed the last Martha Allan production. Meanwhile the Tin Hats went from strength to strength.

#### 1941-1942: Twelfth Season

MRT was discovering that it was not practical to be as enterprising in wartime as it had been during the 'thirties. Rival top-quality entertainments were affecting their box-office. In the Fall of 1941 many movie houses were open; Citizen Kane was making its rounds for the first time; the Ballet Russe was performing at His Majesty's Theatre; the New York Metropolitan Opera was presenting five operas, including Faust and Aida, at Théâtre St Denis.

MRT's Twelfth Season opened with comedy--Here Today by George Oppenheimer--in the hands of two veterans. Filmore Sadler as director and Louis Mulligan as set designer were to be responsible for four of the season's six major productions. They had been with the company for a decade and had helped shape its destiny. Joy Lafleur, who took the lead, had played professionally during the summer at His Majesty's Theatre opposite Francis Lederer. Herbert Whittaker's review found Here Today an "attractively set, well-cast offering." He was even more enthusiastic about the next offering, Saroyan's lyrical comedy, My Heart's in the Highlands. This piece, he expected, would provide the highlight of the season. The prediction was generous coming from a man with a

work of his own scheduled for production in that same season. The Group had first staged this work in New York as recently as 1939. Saroyan, "a new writer of considerable charm, optimism and fresh individuality,"<sup>122</sup> was heard with appreciation even while The Group, which was promoting him, was itself in the process of dissolution.

MRT again turned back to Britain for scripts and came up with a comedy-thriller, Someone at the Door by the Christie's, D and C, and a drama, Sixteen, which explored an adolescent's reaction to her mother's remarriage. This kind of material had been thoroughly mastered by the company in pre-war years and they retained the actors with the style to carry it off. Marigold Charlesworth, here in a minor role, would later be found directing at the Stratford Festival. Meanwhile MRT's business affairs were taking an interesting turn as the company abandoned the old Studio. Without fuss or flourish the work was transferred to premises on Guy Street which were to be the setting for MRT's most memorable years. John Hoare received the honour of being first to face an audience in the new house when in March 1942 he delivered a public lecture on "Theatre in Montreal Since 1910." The topic was one on which few could match his first-hand expertise and experience.

While the fortunes of MRT had taken a revolutionary turn for the better in the matter of bricks and mortar, it seemed at the time a poor return for what fate had taken away. Still a young woman three years short of fifty, Martha Allan died.

Chapter 4The Tin Hats: 1939-1945

A significant element in the total work of MRT, which needs to be considered apart from the narrative of the well-established annual seasons, is the special war-time project described in this chapter. Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939--a Sunday. By the following Saturday MRT was able to proclaim its own war-readiness. The company had become officially affiliated with the Canadian Red Cross and would function as a unit of the organization for the duration of the war. All profits would go to Red Cross funds. The skills of the company would be available to the Red Cross for organizing benefit productions such as concert parties. This supervisory service would be available to all groups in Montreal which were offering benefit performances to the Red Cross. In addition to theatre work, Red Cross projects would be undertaken using the Studio as headquarters. This information was published in the Gazette a day before the Government of Canada made its own declaration of war. <sup>123</sup>

Early in the new year details of Montreal's wartime organization were made public. The MRT unit--known as "The Tin Hats"--would be responsible for a program of entertainment for soldiers under the Auxiliary War Services Department of Military District No 4. The record of their work is sketchy for obvious reasons. The Tin Hats did not need either a subscription list or advertising to raise an audience; the troops would go where they were sent. Security

regulations restricted information about the movement of Canadian soldiers. At that stage in the war such news as there was tended to consist of announcements after the event. With a portable stage and sound equipment MRT met its audiences in surroundings vastly different from the ballrooms of the Ritz-Carlton and the Windsor Hotel, as we see in February 1940.

1940 Thurs. Feb.15: Craig St.Drill Hall, Montreal  
 Cabaret for Farewell Dance  
 of 5th Field Battery  
 Mon. Feb.19: Salle de l'Assistance  
 Publique  
 A Revue (with 28 Numbers)  
 for Army Service Corps (NOTE 124)

The Tin Hats Review, which was presented in May to the public, brought the company back to the Windsor. For the first time civilians were allowed to see the kind of work MRT had been presenting to military audiences through the winter. Much of the actual material was fresh and ready for entertaining troops in their summer camps. Attractions included a chorus line, tap dancers, vocal quartet and a double piano team--with Keith Handyside in charge of the staging. The company included such MRT stalwarts as John Pratt, Robert Goodier, Lionel Murton and Eileen Clifford.

In the fall of 1940 the Tin Hats were again in regular action, moving swiftly from engagement to engagement.

1940 Wed. Sept. 18: 5th Auto A. Battery . Montreal

Sat. Sept. 21: Presentation in English and  
 French :Blue Room of Domaine  
 d'Esterel : Ste. Marguerite de  
 Lac Masson

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Wed. Sept. 25: Presentation at Three  
 Rivers

Fri. Sept. 27: Audition for French-speaking performers in Montreal (NOTE 126)

After a year of war the Gazette printed a brief account of the activities of the Tin Hats. <sup>127</sup> Twenty thousand soldiers and airmen had been entertained. A peak of activity was attained at the Canadian Forces Base at Petawawa where they gave four performances in twenty-four hours. This touring company was geared to travel, whether to the Armory of the Canadian Grenadier Guards (16 Nov. 1940) or to the St. Henry Fire Station, Montreal, to entertain the First Battalion of the Victoria Rifles (23 Nov. 1940). All the while less spectacular work continued steadily at the Red Cross Sewing and Knitting Branch of MRT back in the Studio.

December 1940 shows the kind of adaptability demanded of the Tin Hats. On the evening of Saturday, the 7th. they gave a show for the Sherbrooke Fusiliers in Sherbrooke, followed by a repeat performance on the Sunday afternoon. A week later on the Monday they were in Montreal working at the Mountain St. Barracks in front of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserves. Saturday, the 21st. found them again in town entertaining a thousand officers and men in a 'Furlough Fiesta' for No 4 District Depot at the Atwater Market.

Major MRT productions continued without interruption. During the First World War Trinity Players had ended their regular seasons and stopped producing. In the Second War both they and MRT continued to serve their audiences. The Tin Hats moved around as before--in January 1941 to the Training

Centre at Farnham, to St George's Church Hall, Montreal, to the Clubhouse of Montreal's Badminton and Squash Club. The peripatetic nature of MRT's normal production schedule had trained members well for moving their equipment from stage to stage. Recruitment never stopped. March 19 brought a Gazette advertisement for Tin Hats' auditions to be held in the Studio. May 17th found the company on the road in Victoriaville at the R.C.A.F. Training School. The 22nd saw them at the Jacques Cartier Barracks in Longueuil, and four days later they were back in the Windsor Hotel with the MRT's annual spectacular production--The Tin Hat Revue.

This last show stayed in the repertoire through the summer ending with a final September performance at St. Adèle in the Laurentians. Ten days later an entirely new show was mounted for a Kiwanis Benefit at the 'Normandie Roof.' As the Tin Hats company completed its second year members could look back on a satisfying total audience of 70,000 since their inception. Their equipment had been further elaborated and by this time included a portable proscenium arch and a portable electrical control panel.

The following year of the war passed in activities similar to those of the first two. By December 1941 the Tin Hats were equipped to do a complete show in French for an audience of 800 at the St. Jerome Basic Training Centre No 44. Their growing capabilities enabled them to leave the Province of Quebec this year to perform at Air Force stations in the Maritime Provinces. In a period of eight days in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island eleven performances were given.

"It is believed," noted the Gazette, "to be the first occasion on which a voluntary entertainment troupe has been able to make such an extended tour. The tour itself was made possible through the co-operation of the cast's employers who are permitting their employees to take the necessary time off from their regular work."<sup>129</sup>

At this distance in time it is difficult to imagine the detail of preparation and the spirit of co-operation which would have been needed to bring off such a tour successfully. Norma Springford, who would preside over MRT's final days, had at that time newly arrived in Montreal from the Maritimes and recalls vividly the economic effects of the war on theatrical supplies. "The price of everything went sky high--cloth, nails, tools, paint."<sup>130</sup> An indication of the severity of the war measures is the fact that after the end of October no more "beverage" alcohol was legally available in the country.

From an issue of CUE in February 1943 we can gain some idea of the relative strength of the two companies working under the MRT banner. The regular MRT staff in charge of the public subscription season had been cut to a slim total of eight members, including Filmore Sadler who took over as Supervising Director on the death of Martha Allan. The Tin Hats' staff had ten members. The nature of their specialised work with a variety of distinct acts was made clear by the listing of no fewer than three Producing Directors under the Managing Director.<sup>132</sup> The new Supervising Director (August 1943) regretted that there could be no more Studio shows

because of lack of human resources. "Since Majors represent our primary obligation to subscribers," insisted John Hoare, "and Tin Hats MRT's essential war contribution, those two remain and, for the present, the rest is out. This also applies to the School of the Theatre." <sup>133</sup> Hoare did promise that if his general overhaul of affairs was successful he foresaw the possibility of trying a Studio show but not until the war's end could the Studio re-open on its previous ambitious scale.

In July 1943 a second and longer tour took place on which not all the drama was confined to the stage. "We sat sweltering on a siding," recalls producer Fred Gross, "while the railroad apparently searched the entire coast to find us a locomotive; batteries on the cars died, lights failed, water stopped, and we lived unwashed in darkness; meals were missed, sleep was short, and organizational indigestion caused the railroad to send our baggage car to Montreal instead of Mont Joli, necessitating an extra day's stay." <sup>134</sup> The compensations provided a correspondingly rich experience. "When we reached the Finale .... Remember ? The entire hall rising and literally cheering the roof from its moorings. Yay-ay-ay! Does anyone ever, in any other field of endeavour, experience just that kind of a thrill?" <sup>135</sup>

Months after the event, a member of this touring company --Claire Ponman--from Montreal's Notre Dame de Grace district, was given a small measure of the fame of which wartime security had previously cheated her. It was revealed that her talent as a singer, which MRT had discovered when she

auditioned for the Tin Hats, had left a lasting impression on some officials of the Armed Forces. When the Conference of Allied leaders--Churchill, Roosevelt, Mackenzie King--took place in Quebec City in 1943, Miss Ponman was called to entertain the distinguished audience privately, and thereby launched herself on an independent professional career. <sup>136</sup>

1943 saw the start of a number of other careers based on MRT experience. The Tin Hat comedy stars, John Pratt, Robert Goodier and Lionel Murton, had become stars of a bigger show--the Royal Canadian Navy's "Meet The Navy," and in their going took with them a half dozen of the company's attractive chorus girls. While it was not unusual for occasional Tin Hatters to graduate from volunteer to professional work as troop entertainers, this mass departure left what appeared to be an almost irreparable hole in the company's resources. To MRT's delight, however, they had no problem in recruiting more than enough capable talent to allow the show to go on. Prior to this happy discovery there had been a strong movement to disband the operation so that the new Tin Hats would not be seen and compared unfavourably with the old. The new season opened in November with a "Modes for Morale" show in the ballroom of the Mount Royal Hotel. Under the sponsorship of Holt-Renfrew, who provided the fashion items, this event was part fashion-parade and part extracts from the Tin Hats' latest revue. <sup>137</sup>

January 1944 started with a hometown success for ex-members of the Tin Hats when Messrs Pratt, Goodier and Murton came with Meet The Navy for an engagement at His Majesty's

Theatre. Troop entertainment was by this time a flourishing enterprise. The Tin Hats were unique, but they were not alone. A four day period in February 1944 saw the following companies giving presentations: Mary Beetle's Variety Show; Thumbs Up Revue; Hilda Galt's Revue; Hefts Russian Entertainers; Canadian Legion A.A. Stars; Eaton's Masquers; Rota Revue; T.N.T. Revue; B'Nai Brith Showboat.<sup>138</sup> To this list should be added many other companies which had followed MRT's lead and were regularly giving presentations to the troops: The Evans Sisters' Troop Show; Sun Life Revue; Red Triangle Revue; Legs--N--Airs; Marty Kenny's Victory Parade.

The first week of June 1944 brought long awaited news from Europe. On the 5th headlines announced "Rome Liberated"; the following day they said "Invasion Launched." Despite encouraging signs that the end of the war was in sight, the Tin Hats continued to recruit, and on September 9th they announced auditions in the biggest advertisement MRT had ever placed in the Gazette.<sup>139</sup> In the spring of 1945 Handyside and Gross resigned under pressure of work outside their theatrical activity and were replaced by men of wide experience. Rusty Davis was a C.B.C. radio producer who had composed many scores for the McGill Red and White Revues. James Coghill as a boy had toured the United States in the First World War with the "Winnipeg Kiddies' Revue" and had a lifetime's experience as vaudeville performer and producer. Geoffrey Merrill, Chairman of the Board of Management through the war years, welcomed them warmly in CUE but there was little future for the Tin Hats they were to

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lead. At its end the war--and the Tin Hats--had endured for six years. With the coming of peace the need to sustain troop morale at home no longer existed. Several other companies continued to perform for some months after hostilities ceased, but the Tin Hats are not listed after early 1946. They had been the first to mobilize--even before the Government of Canada. Enough was enough.

On the whole the experience was good. During the years 1939 to 1945 MRT successfully weathered many difficulties. Most significant was the death in 1942 of the omniscient founder, Martha Allan. She was followed for a brief period by Filmore Sadler, before the succession passed to John Hoare, then Mildred Mitchell, and in 1946 to the capable Doreen Lewis. Martha Allan's shoes had been too big to be easily filled. The MRT in its first dozen years had grown accustomed to the steady and consistent control of a single individual. As others tried to take Allan's place and help MRT to develop a new identity, the patriotic pressure of keeping the Tin Hats going at all costs, alongside the season of Major productions, provided a valuable source of discipline for the company. Unlike Canada's most celebrated group of troop entertainers of World War One, "The Dumbells," whose members were all military personnel, MRT's Tin Hats gave civilians the opportunity of participating in essential war work. Their profit was to discover "a heartening satisfaction, a feeling that in some measure, small though it might be, the Tin Hats were helping do a job that badly need[ed] doing. And to them,

that feeling brought reward in generous measure." 141

\* \* \*

Chapter 5

The Guy Street Playhouse: 1942-1952

The narrative now returns to the time of Martha Allan's death when one man took control of MRT. "There was Fil Sadler," recalled Beatrice Munro Brown in the Twentieth Anniversary edition of CUE, "the main bulwark against the shock of Martha's death and the upheaval of our move. And Fil again whose warmth made strangers comfortable when they walked for the first time into the Playhouse."<sup>142</sup>

Described by Herbert Whittaker as "pure New England, a Yankee, breezy and outgoing,"<sup>143</sup> Filmore Sadler had met his wife, Marjorie, also a power in MRT, at theatre school in Boston. He worked in Martha's Vineyard with the Phidelah River Players and in stock theatres in New England.<sup>144</sup> In 1931 he became first director of the MRT School of the Theatre where he specialized in speech training. Later he was active as director and performer in major productions and in Studio work. In 1935 he was made Associate Director of the company. Two years later the Sadlers returned to the Eastern Townships where they had first made their home in Canada.<sup>145</sup> (She was originally from Johannesburg.) The purpose was to open a Summer Theatre and theatre school at Brae Manor in Knowlton. This operation, which proved highly successful, started under the sponsorship of MRT and ran for many years. Brae Manor was an important outlet for MRT talent and by its success did much to encourage the founding of a significant number of other summer theatres in the Montreal area. By the time

Filmore Sadler retired from his work in Montreal in 1943, Brae Manor had staged almost fifty summer productions and with the backing of local residents had in 1939 built a new theatre to house its operations.<sup>146</sup> In the Twentieth Anniversary CUE Sadler's photograph has the honour of being displayed along with those of Louis Mulligan, Cecil West and Martha Allan under the caption--"THE BUILDERS."<sup>147</sup>

The first production which followed Martha Allan's death was an interesting homegrown comic melodrama by Herbert Whittaker, of MRT and the Montreal Gazette, and Janet McPhee, one of the writers encouraged by the company. The latter had won the Barry Jackson Trophy in 1939 for her play, Divinity, which Whittaker had directed. Jupiter in Retreat was billed as "the first full-length play written by Canadians produced by MRT."<sup>148</sup> The work centred on "an irascible mathematician and the problems he encounters in his Laurentian cabin."<sup>149</sup> The Gazette's jazz columnist reviewed the production as a "pleasing and entertaining melodrama" whose authors "have set a high mark for local playwrights to aim at."<sup>150</sup>

Sheridan's The Rivals followed in a stylish production which Whittaker found "charmingly set and competently played."<sup>151</sup> Despite the trauma of losing Martha Allan, the company's high standards had not suffered. Filmore Sadler directed, with fellow "Builder" Louis Mulligan responsible for set design. Up to that time nearly thirty major productions had been done consecutively in Westmount's Victoria Hall, the exceptions being light end-of-season entertainments at the Windsor Hotel where refreshments could

easily be provided. This twelfth season, in which MRT had experienced its first change of leadership, ended at last. Meanwhile in Guy Street a conversion was in progress which would at last give the company the theatre it had so long desired.

### 1942-1943: Thirteenth Season

The new season began with comedy in an unusual setting. A classical farce, The Warrior's Husband by Julian Thompson, put Theseus, Hippolyta and Hercules on the Victoria Hall stage, where it was followed by a thriller, Nine Pine Street, from Miles and Cotton, dealing with the Lizzie Borden story. In the latter Mildred Mitchell took up Martha Allan's approach by directing and taking the lead. In 1944 she would fully accept the founder's burden when she became Producing Director.

By January the space in Guy Street had been transformed from ballroom to theatre. The proscenium opening was nineteen feet wide and nineteen feet high, the stage fifteen feet deep. A narrow balcony, preserved from the original high-ceilinged room, brought the total number of seats close to two hundred. "The quarters," commented Archer, "are as cramped almost as a sampan." <sup>152</sup> This was intimate theatre--at last a permanent playhouse for MRT. But the price paid in the long run for this stable base was very high. The blunt truth was that the house seated too small an audience for the company to obtain with its brief runs the revenue it needed. At the time the new playhouse appeared as a blessing, especially as the cost of the conversion was handled by Sir Montagu and Lady

Allan, Martha's parents, as a gift to the company.

The first major production in the new house (January 1943) was Lillian Hellman's Watch on the Rhine. This played on Broadway some months before Pearl Harbour (1941) giving sharp warning to Americans about the dimensions of the Nazi threat. The strains which the newly acquired playhouse would place on the company were apparent from the start. To compensate for perhaps a couple of hundred seats lost by moving away from Victoria Hall seven performances were given in place of the three which had become normal. Sadler, the new Supervising Director, directed the first two major productions at Guy Street. The ugliness in Hellman's drama was followed by comedy, The Late Christopher Bean, a satire on art dealers and art critics first shown on Broadway ten years previously. Distant Point by Afinogenov was a Russian drama in which the virtues of warm-hearted communists attempting self-improvement echoed the Allied war effort. At this time the United States, Britain and Canada were making common cause with Russia against Hitler's forces. Virtues were seen in communism which the West had not previously discerned. A Lesley Storm comedy, Tony Draws a Horse, ended the season and the association of Filmore Sadler with MRT. On taking control he discovered the vulnerability of the company's financial affairs, and after the season retired to Brae Manor for the regularly successful summer program.<sup>153</sup> Never again would he exercise in Montreal the influence he had developed in a decade with MRT.

The season's program had for the first time been prepared through a play-reading or play-choosing committee. Sadler, writing in CUE, uses both descriptions of the work as he discusses the practical problems facing those involved.<sup>154</sup> There were few other activities to complement the program of major productions. A Studio production in January of Shakespeare's Richard II found the company turning to performances for school audiences as an untapped source of revenue. The following month the company's irrepressible interest in experimental productions moved them to present Church Street by Lennox Robinson, one of the pioneers of Dublin's Abbey Theatre. Disregarding the war the MRT could look fondly across the Atlantic and take pride in the Irish elements in its lineage.

#### 1943-1944: Fourteenth Season

The gap in MRT's management was filled by John Hoare who was appointed at this time as Supervising Director. Hoare had worked as a director with the Community Players where he first made contact with Martha Allan, when she played in the 1919-1920 winter season in his play, The Squirrels. An important part of his subsequent career was spent in Paris where he scouted plays for a London theatrical agency. He also wrote and produced for London and New York stages. His presence in Montreal in 1943 was due to the sad chance of suffering from a serious illness at the time war broke out. Unable to return to his work in England, he kept busy with radio work, writing, and the chairmanship of the National Film Society in Montreal.

Simultaneously he re-activated his contacts with MRT, and set about restoring standards to the high level which they had previously reached. "Back Stage organization is the solar plexus of Community Theatre," Hoare declared in CUE. "One chief reason the MRT did so well and survived so long was because of the efficiency and esprit de corps of its old-time back-stage crew, headed by Cecil West." 155

Unfortunately Cecil West had left the company a year earlier after working with Allan since MRT's first production. An appeal in the press for volunteers produced some help in the shape of artists, back-stage crew and several fully qualified electricians. Among these was Bill Springford, who would still be on hand training young technicians in the company's final season. 156 Hoare's problem is set out frankly for the members:

....what with the drains of war, changes in personnel, the heavy demands of the Tin Hats and the fact that, in our own Theatre, we require ten successive nights of back-stage work for each production, the whole thing must be properly reorganized on a basis of reliefs. 157

This help was obtained, but the ongoing burden of ten successive nights remained. A further problem Hoare had to face was a relaxation in the company's discipline since Allan's departure. A particular episode described by Hoare indicates the extent of the gap between the founder's professionally high standards and the reality of MRT only a year after her death:

On one occasion a large outside group of singers and dancers or what-not had been duly loaned the Studio one afternoon. Rehearsal was late in finishing, a thing that inevitably occurs from time to time. Meanwhile the crowd burst in, invaded the Studio, some of them mounting the stage while the performers were still there.

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At this time Whittaker was chairman of the Play Choosing Committee and responsible for opening the season with a topical thriller involving French peasants and Nazis--Men In Shadow by Mary Hayley Bell. The mood lightened with the farce, Dark Eyes, which had run successfully in New York the previous year. Crowd-pleasing choices continued with a murder-drama, Suspect, and another farce, Out of the Frying Pan. What Whittaker in his capacity as Gazette critic calls "the company's first bid for serious consideration this year,"<sup>159</sup> was Hotel Universe--a 1930 experimental work by Philip Barry. The piece showed Americans of the 'lost generation' in voluntary exile in the south of France. The success of this production brought MRT an invitation to give several performances in Ottawa. Hoare himself provided the season's last work, a period comedy, The Devil and All, which had first seen the stage in one-act form in Victoria Hall some four years previously.

The season had severely taxed MRT. The company lost the services of veterans Pratt, Murton and Goodier when they graduated from the Tin Hats to Meet The Navy. John Hoare had handed over the reins to Mildred Mitchell. A

newsletter, circulated to members after the end of the season, reveals the precarious nature of the company's finances. The full balance sheet is printed along with a request from the President of MRT, Dr. Charles F. Martin, that members should immediately send in their (newly raised) annual subscriptions so that the company would have a reasonable picture of its financial standing before the 1944-1945 season opened.

The dismal figures show that a balance of \$10,274.57 brought forward from the previous year had dwindled to \$1,054.90. A large portion of the drop was due to a loss on the sale of property. Another alarming set of figures is seen in the expenditure column.

Major Productions - Expenses	\$2,665.43
Less - Ticket Sales	2,098.80
	<hr/>
- Loss	566.63

Two more figures extracted from the Balance Sheet show the threat posed to MRT by the coming season.

Operating Expenses - 1943 - 44	\$8,029.74
Membership Fees - 1943 - 44	7,854.70
	<hr/>
Shortfall -	175.04
	(NOTE 160)

The reserves had gone; membership fees did not cover fixed expenses (rent, office salaries, maintenance, etc.); production costs were not covered by occasional ticket sales; there was an overall loss on operations over the season of \$2,152.26. Nevertheless the management was not discouraged. Subscriptions were raised, and the company under its new

Producing Director prepared to put on a season of six Major Productions.

1944-1945: Fifteenth Season

The action of the 89th major production was located in the seventeenth century and based on the amorous adventures of the diarist Samuel Pepys. And So To Bed was followed by a 'psychological melodrama' called Guest In The House, and a fairly recent (1941) Broadway farce, Junior Miss, by Chodorov and Fields which dealt humorously with the growing pains of a teenage girl. Another comedy followed--On Borrowed Time--a fantasy in which death was postponed for a while for a grandfather with strong love for his orphaned grandson. In March, after the long sequence of financially successful escapism, arrived a production of some weight. Robert Sherwood's drama of 1940, There Shall Be No Night, brought Eleanor Stuart back to MRT with a forceful reminder of the dangers of pacifism and the uselessness of such a philosophy in the face of a tyrant's aggression. The official season ended in April with Candlelight by Siegfried Geyer, yet another comedy, which was felt to be "very thin stuff."<sup>161</sup>

An end to the war in Europe came with V.E. Day on May 8th. Nine days later a number of MRT members lent their strength to the newly-formed Shakespeare Society's production of Much Ado About Nothing in Moyse Hall. This first venture of the Society took place under the sponsorship of the Montreal Festivals and MRT. The company had survived the season with Producing Director Mildred Mitchell directing four

of the six productions. The Tin Hats had come to the end of their voluntary task of troop entertainment. Now MRT could lay down its patriotic burden and concentrate on rebuilding a company for peace-time conditions.

#### Sixteenth Season: 1945-1946

The first post-war season opened with the historical drama, Viceroy Sarah, by Norman Ginsbury, featuring the First Duke of Marlborough, victor of Blenheim, and fighting ancestor of Winston Churchill. Britain's electors had recently rejected Churchill--an ironic decision after his heroic leadership during the war years. In this production Myron Galloway, later to metamorphose from actor and writer into theatre critic of the Montreal Star, makes an early appearance. The comedy which followed--Snafu--saw a promising newcomer, Leo Ciceri, take his first steps towards an international acting career. Next came the first attempt at a classic since the 1942 production of The Rivals. Goldsmith's She Stoops To Conquer again took the audience back to the eighteenth century and an attempt was made to present this work as the first audience would have seen it. Whittaker noted that the production had managed to capture something of a period atmosphere by giving the effect of candlelight, and that some actors did manage to achieve the style of the period. <sup>162</sup> Saroyan's fantasy, The Beautiful People, helped support the notion that the worries of a family can sometimes have a happy ending.

A thriller, The Old Ladies, based on Hugh Walpole's

novel, caused MRT a little problem. The narrow balcony of the original ballroom, now running round three sides of the tiny theatre, had to be closed to the audience because Whittaker's set, which provided a full three-storey rooming house, made use of this structure. To replace lost income the run started Wednesday instead of Saturday thus giving three additional performances. The company's hundredth major production was one of the most popular plays of the century--The Corn Is Green by Emyln Williams. Whittaker, in his Gazette review, congratulates the director. "This production is a credit to Miss Beatty and a worthy centenary show for MRT," he wrote. <sup>163</sup> Young Eric Donkin made his MRT debut in this production.

The season had consisted of six major productions. A successful attempt had been made to break away from the lightweight fare which had seemed appropriate for so long. A new designer, Hans Berends, had been discovered; he designed five of the six sets and had many good seasons ahead of him. In contrast with the recent past the account books showed a modest profit--\$435 on overall operations for the year. <sup>164</sup> One further sign of the new spring was the formation of the MRT Theatre Club. The opening statement of the club's 1945 draft constitution gives us an idea of new directions that members wished to take:

That the object of the Club be the promotion of unity among MRT workers, the keeping in touch with MRT activities, and the study of all <sup>165</sup> matters pertaining to the theatre.

The need for communication, which would be more complete than that provided by informal contact and by CUE, is confirmed by talking with former members. While the word 'clique' was never used, there was mention of an 'inner circle' whose approval was vital. If accepted a member could not be faulted; without this approval it was unlikely that the member would be allowed any important work, except in an emergency. In consequence certain players with moderate talent would regularly be given demanding parts while more capable players would not be allowed to prove what they could do.

Other proposed Club activities--playreadings, discussions, lectures and visits from prominent theatre personalities were all familiar MRT activities before the Club came into being. The nominal membership fee of an annual dollar was a small price to pay for "the promotion of unity." A glance at Appendix A shows the management structure with which MRT had<sup>166</sup> burdened itself. In the long run it is obvious that many people who found a social outlet in the MRT were not sufficiently committed to theatre to do the fund-raising and support work which was the unspoken price of their honorary titles. To the ultimate detriment of MRT they took out more than they put in.

Seventeenth Season: 1946-1947

Guidance of the company was now put into the capable hands of Doreen Lewis, whose length of time in office (1946-1952) proved to be second only to that of Martha Allan. She was a graduate of the MRT School, a Speech and Drama specialist, a student of ballet, and a prominent member of the Lakeshore Summer Theatre as actress and manager. She had built a solid reputation for solving production problems and for her technical skills. The opening production, Thomas Job's Uncle Harry, welcomed Robert Goodier back from his Meet the Navy stint to take the lead. Directing for the first time was Jean de Savoye who would later take over as Managing Director.

The next production took MRT into the French repertoire for the first time in many years. Mauriac's Asmodée from 1937 was his first play after several successful novels, and brought to the stage an eighteenth century legend of an Old Testament demon who flew over Madrid removing roofs to see what was happening inside. A significant find for the company was director Pierre Dagenais. This brilliant and energetic innovator with his company, L'Equipe, lent a new lustre to French theatre in Montreal in the 'forties. The North American premiere was distinguished by a remarkable single-room set by Hans Berends:

Each wall opened in turn so that the picture can be seen from three different points of view. This gives an unusual effect....to the last scene of the play. The audience eventually looks through the window and

sees the characters surrounded by four walls, like  
 167  
 birds in a cage.

Christopher Plummer joined the company for the first time in this production playing a young English boy. The new year saw a second play from France--Amphitryon 38--which was by Giraudoux' reckoning the thirty-eighth version of the Greek legend in which Jupiter by a trick seduces Alkmene, faithful wife of Amphitryon, the Theban general. This comedy sparkled to such effect under the direction of Roeberta Beatty that Herbert Whittaker judged it "one of the most delightful plays it [MRT] has ever presented." 168 Cicely Howland, in the role of the wife, brought to the part her experience of training with Michel St. Denis and the Compagnie de Quinze. The successful production was invited to Toronto by the New Play Society which arranged for performances in the tiny theatre of the Royal Ontario Museum.

MRT next turned to sophisticated, American-style comedy with Behrman's 1932 Theatre Guild success, Biography, directed by Herbert Whittaker. Roeberta Beatty enjoyed her second triumph of the season with a long-remembered production of The Barretts of Wimpole Street in which Eleanor Stuart played Elizabeth Barrett. Beatty was praised for her "brilliant directorial ability," and the company was complimented for its "growing professionalism." 169 The final major production was directed by Malcolm Morley from England whose first theatrical connection with Canada had come when he adjudicated for the DDF. His career had taken him to New York in his youth followed by a busy period during which he

directed at such well-known houses as the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon, and the Oxford Playhouse. Morley's MRT production of Anderson's Joan of Lorraine took place only a year after its New York premiere.

This season saw the post-war rebirth of MRT's School of the Theatre under the management of Roeberta Beatty. She had enjoyed a successful American career for twenty years before settling in Montreal where she "idealistically associated herself with community theatre."<sup>170</sup> The DDF was functioning again after a wartime hiatus. With Act II of Amphitryon the MRT carried off the Martha Allan award for the best presentation of a play in English in the Western Quebec Finals. Financially the company's affairs were moving in a better direction than had seemed possible at the end of the war. Assets were listed on the Balance Sheet of 31 May 1947 at \$6,226.85 and there was a surplus in the Reserve Account<sup>171</sup> over the twelve month period of \$1,269.35. The time was ripe for an expansion of Montreal's theatrical activity as evidenced by the growing success of Joy Thomson's Canadian Art Theatre. This new enterprise, which mounted its first production at Christmas 1944, had subsequently established its own theatre school and acquired premises on Monkland Avenue. The Shakespeare Society's 1947 production of Romeo and Juliet saw MRT's Christopher Plummer and Leo Ciceri as Paris and Benvolio. Rosanna Seaborn, with many credits as actress and director for MRT, inaugurated The Open Air Theatre on the top of Mount Royal with the help of MRT, CAT and The

Shakespeare Society. London's Regent's Park Theatre provided the inspiration for this venture. The first annual production was A Midsummer Night's Dream in which Plummer played a memorable Lysander. Staging was the responsibility of the well-known Russian producer, Theodore Komisarjevsky. It appeared that English theatre in Montreal had entered a period of vigorous and healthy growth.

Eighteenth Season: 1947-1948

Charles Rittenhouse directed the first production of this season--one of more than a dozen major productions for which he was responsible over the years, to say nothing of Studio and School of the Theatre presentations. This time the play was a comedy-drama from Spain--The Two Shepherds--by Martinez-Sierra. Then followed a Terence Rattigan comedy, While The Sun Shines, and O'Neill's Ah, Wilderness !. They next attempted the Irish classic, Juno and the Paycock, with a cast whose unfamiliar names suggest special recruitment for this production. A new name among writers appears next on the MRT playbill with the presentation of Arthur Miller's All My Sons fresh from a New York opening the previous year. The company used this recent hit to break away from the confines of their Playhouse and work in McGill University's Moyse Hall for the first time since 1934. This same venue housed the season's last major production--John van Druten's sentimental comedy, I Remember Mama. With the seating in Moyse Hall being more than twice that of Guy Street (460 v 200) fewer performances were needed--five instead of ten--to

accommodate subscribers. Two of MRT's heavyweights, Roeberta Beatty and Herbert Whittaker, were given the responsibility for this production.

In this season MRT was getting back to its pre-war stride on a number of fronts. Selection of plays for major productions was more ambitious and varied than it had been for years. The Studio re-opened as a showcase for interesting novelties and presented in December an evening of one-act plays by various authors. March saw a Studio production of three one-acts by Robertson Davies. Two of the three evenings were graced by the presence of the author.

This renewed Studio activity caught the attention of the Montreal Star's critic, Sydney Johnson. "A repertory theatre devoted to the cause of drama, has other duties than giving us the opportunity to see popular Broadway and London commercial successes....One of these duties surely must be to foster and keep alive our own talent." <sup>172</sup> Janet McPhee, Chairman of Studio Productions agreed. "Our other major purpose," she explained, "was to offer a stage to directors for uncommercial ventures or for the development of their abilities." <sup>173</sup> The plays were all entertaining in themselves, and in mounting the productions four directors new to MRT had been blooded.

The School of the Theatre flourished under the direction of Roeberta Beatty and her fully professional staff including Charles Rittenhouse, Eleanor Stuart, the designer Hans Berends, and Virginia Watt, Costume Director of MRT and Designer and Manager for Malabar, the Canada-wide costuming

firm. Dodie Smith's comedy, Dear Octopus, directed by Beatty, was the ambitious choice to end the year as a display of the School's talent.

Another MRT service expanded at this time was the Community Players Theatre Library. The books and other materials in this historic collection were used by students of the School of the Theatre and were also accessible to the public. The Librarian's Report outlines the range of activity:

There are 95 registered borrowers this season as against 68 last season. Among them are 14 play-reading groups, 5 of them outside the city, which depend upon us for material. They not only borrow multiple copies of plays for reading but are beginning to ask for technical books to help in  
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their production problems.

The Theatre Club, whose membership was around a hundred, is given a generous write-up in the March 1948 issue of CUE. Attendance at the monthly meetings was around 50 %. Among the speakers that season were Fr Emile Légault, Director of Les Compagnons, and Gratien Gélinas, at that time best known for his character, Fridolin. "Fr Légault particularly stressed the importance to the cultural life of the community of much closer co-operation between French-speaking and English-speaking Little Theatre Groups and even within groups themselves." 175 This idea was picked up by MRT and turned into formal arrangements. Within a short time delegations were welcomed from the YMHA Little Theatre, the Negro  
176  
Community Theatre Guild, and Trinity Players.

The refreshing confidence of the March report was followed the next month by a bleakly worded 'Announcement to Members'. Subscription rates would be increased, members learned and Studio productions would be kept down to three. Major productions would be reduced from six to five "for the purpose of relieving pressure on producers, directors, casts, technicians and all concerned with productions so that they may have reasonable conditions for giving our audiences their best work." <sup>177</sup> Two of the majors would again be mounted in Moyses Hall. The pressures exerted by the confines of Guy Street were considerable, but there was more:

1. The marked rise in operating costs of all kinds within the last year.
2. Operations of the MRT this season until the end of March have resulted in a substantial loss.
3. Beginning with the 1st October 1948, our rent at <sup>178</sup> 1550 Guy Street will be doubled.

The last line could only have meant heartbreak to members who were discovering that hard work and a theatre of their own was not bringing the rewards they had expected.

#### Nineteenth Season: 1948-1949

In the summer of 1948 Rosanna Seaborn's Open Air Theatre on Mount Royal tackled As You Like It with MRT's young Christopher Plummer as Oliver. Leo Ciceri, on graduating from McGill in the spring, had been accepted by London's Old Vic theatre school. Also for the first time the federal government had heeded requests from MRT and agreed that their status

should be changed from that of an Entertainment Group to that of a "cultural and educational organization" and thereby qualify them for financial relief. These negotiations had begun in 1938!<sup>179</sup>

Herbert Whittaker filled his review of the first production--Clemence Dane's Will Shakespeare--with phrases for the billboards: "successful venture," "milestone for the MRT," "...most ambitious production ever attempted by Montreal's leading drama group."<sup>180</sup> The reviewer for Notre Temps singles out for attention the impressive set by Hans Berends: "l'auteur des décors réalistes qui font beaucoup pour créer l'ambiance de l'époque et donne un cadre approprié au sujet."<sup>181</sup> Jean Ampleman proclaims Eleanor Stuart's mastery of her part:

[E.S.] a trouvé ainsi l'occasion de fournir sa plus belle interprétation. Elle incarne bien la grande reine Elizabeth, dans son maintien, ses gestes, sa démarche, ses intonations, son accent. Quand elle est en scène, elle domine la pièce.<sup>182</sup>

This ambitious effort in Moyse Hall was followed in Guy Street by a light-hearted satire on banking, (Help Yourself by Paul Vulpius) and Rattigan's moving drama about fighting injustice in the legal system--The Winslow Boy. (1946) Eric Donkin played the youth in the case which was closely modelled on a real-life situation.

Herbert Whittaker's last production for MRT was Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie. In his autobiography

Whittaker gives us an insight into several aspects of the production:

To secure the rights for The Glass Menagerie for MRT three years following its premiere was more of a coup than it might seem now. Williams' 'memory play' was ideally suited to the small Guy Street studio since it had four characters and called for direct communication with the audience... I was lucky in having Amelia Hall available in Montreal at that period. The Ottawa actress and director offered me the right combination of naiveté and drive that makes Williams' portrait of his Southern mother so vivid.... She proved an ideal Amanda, even for those with the memory of the original still fresh in their minds. I also cast Silvio Narizzano, an actor whose later success as a film director depends on a real understanding of what acting is....In George Powell I had a less experienced player for the fourth role but he had just the right kind of breezy normality in contrast with the neurotic principals.

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Thomas Archer, whose Gazette writings had for years been limited to music, revisited MRT for this production and was delighted:

What the group are doing with The Glass Menagerie would seem to match anything on this continent except the top shows on Broadway....How truly well the late Martha Allan built. Twenty years

of trial is a long time, nearly a generation. And  
 only good and sound things can stand such a test. <sup>184</sup>

The novelist, Hugh McLennan, in 1988 confided to Whittaker after many years that he had preferred the MRT version to the first Broadway production. <sup>185</sup> To close the season the company went back to Moyses Hall where they presented Barrie's turn-of-the-century romantic comedy, What Every Woman Knows.

The Studio offered in the fall Sartre's No Exit with Yvette Brind'Amour of the Théâtre du Rideau Vert. On the same bill was Williams' play, Lord Byron's Love Letters. March 1949 found the company presenting Ronald Duncan's verse play, This Way To The Tomb, with music by Benjamin Britten, directed by Amelia Hall. This mini-series ended with a production of three Canadian one-act plays in which Janet McPhee and Dorothy Pfeiffer each directed works of their own.

Some measure of Montreal's postwar resurgence of English theatre is given in CUE for March and April 1949. Companies in action in these two months are St. Gabriel Players, McGill Department of English, YM-YWHA Players, St. Cuthbert's Dramatic Guild, Trinity Players, Grace Players, <sup>186</sup> St. James United Church, St. Matthew's Players, and the MRT School of the Theatre. <sup>187</sup>

The April CUE also contains some interesting statistics about the numbers of people involved in various MRT activities.

At the time of going to press, MRT has produced this year four major and two Studio productions; held

eight monthly meetings of the Theatre Club; conducted a School of the Theatre, which gives courses in Playwriting, Fencing, Make-up, History of the Theatre, Stagecraft, Costuming, Voice and Diction, and Studio Workshop, housed a Theatre Library; and published a Magazine of the Theatre....

...to date the following number of people have found occupation for their leisure hours in:

Play Directing	7	Librarians	8
Stage Management	22	Hostesses	11
Costuming	19	Ushers	65
Properties	19		
Lighting	6		
Make up	5	MRT memberships	642
Prompting	11	MRT Studio	82
Acting	92	Theatre Club	142
		Library Members	110
	<hr/>		
	181	(21 are groups)	
		Students in School of Theatre	36
		(NOTE 188)	

Herbert Whittaker's departure for Toronto seriously weakened MRT's resources. As designer and director he made an invaluable contribution over many years to particular productions, while his "immense store of theatrical knowledge and experience"<sup>189</sup> was available in generous measure to the company. To his new post at the Globe and Mail he brought not only the theories of Poel, Craig and Appia, but also many

years of practical experience with MRT and other Montreal companies. It was a solid foundation for his years as Canada's most respected theatre critic.

Twentieth Season: 1949-1950

This anniversary season opened with Pinero's turn-of-the-century classic of theatre life, Trelawney of The Wells. The date chosen for the anniversary itself was November 23--the day of the meeting in Victoria Hall when the formation of the Theatre Guild of Montreal was first proposed. The anniversary production was The Constant Wife, first performed by the company in December 1930, and first production under the banner of the Montreal Repertory Theatre. Louis Mulligan, one of the original members of the company, directed and designed the sets. Doris Hedges, who had performed in the 1930 production, declined to repeat her young-girl part and took a smaller role more suited to her age. The Governor-General, Vincent Massey, made an impromptu speech of congratulation between the acts. Thomas Archer, now back regularly on the theatre beat since Herbert Whittaker's departure, claimed that the production "outshone anything New York has sent here during the past eight months." 190

The season continued with a pleasing variety of works including from Russia a satirical comedy by Andreyev--The Sabine Women, and one of Priestley's 'psychological dramas'--An Inspector Calls. So successful was the final production--The Heiress--that three extra performances in the Playhouse had to be added. The Studio's activities

included a production of Coriolanus with a cast of over thirty players. The play, though rarely seen to that date, had been done at the Old Vic the previous year. MRT's version saw the stage four times and was frequently mentioned in later years as one of the Studio's most striking accomplishments. The production offered a costuming novelty with players accoutered in crash helmets, dinner jackets and rags.

The Anniversary issue of CUE offered several writers the opportunity to make a sentimental journey back through the 'thirties and 'forties. Beatrice Munro Brown, one of the veterans, was unable to do so. "I was asked to write a gently nostalgic summary of MRT's twenty years of existence. I found I could not. I looked back and I was appalled by the battle, and I could have wept to think how hard a few people had to run to keep us all in the same place."<sup>191</sup>

In the same issue, S. Morgan-Powell, theatre critic of the Montreal Star, commends the company for the success of its educational groups and their valuable work which he believed had not been properly appreciated by the public. He chides MRT gently for the occasional tendency "to chase after plays produced on Broadway just because they were produced on Broadway."<sup>192</sup> Montreal's prosperous English community is roundly condemned for not recognising the value of MRT in the cultural life of the city, and for not coming up with the money needed to establish its operations on a solid basis.

Financial backing of the MRT has never been worthy of a city the size of Montreal. No citizen has yet come forward and expressed willingness to help the

MRT on any comprehensive basis. There are many cities on the North American continent a quarter of the size of this Canadian metropolis who can point with pride to organizations similar to the MRT which have had their paths smoothed and have progressed with success, practical as well as artistic, through the help of generous-minded citizens who have realized the true value of such a cultural movement. 193

Morgan-Powell's final references in the article are to "a general theatrical awakening" throughout the country and the opportunity facing MRT to acquire its own building. This attractive possibility was fully outlined in a Report distributed to members of MRT dated 3 September 1949. At that time, happily, the company was "operating at, or so close to, the break-even point that its activities were being hampered to the point where it was not serving the English Speaking Theatre Community of Montreal to the extent that should rightfully be expected of it." 194

The basic problem was as ever one of space and income. The auditorium was too small and the backstage facilities were cramped. "No reasonable schedule," the Report insisted, "can be followed in the building with the main productions, studio, school and Theatre Club all competing in their demands on the inadequate space for rehearsals, workshop area, and meeting rooms." 195

Buying the building would give MRT an additional income from rents paid by tenants of stores, apartments and garages on the property. The soundness of the building, and the

possibility of expansion by utilising space occupied by the parking lot and an available adjoining lot made the proposal an attractive financial investment. There were two limitations. The option to purchase would expire at the end of February 1950 so there was limited time to organize the campaign. Then there was a capital sum of approximately \$43,500 which would have to be raised. The committee believed that this would be possible, particularly if their proposals for increasing membership were followed, complemented by a publicity campaign for MRT. In the end the project came to nothing. The company would have to wait till 1952 for a way out of their financial dilemma. The solution when it came was sudden and shocking--not at all like welcome relief from an albatross.

#### Twenty-First Season: 1950-1951

After the excitement caused by the Anniversary and the dreams of a new home, MRT settled back into the normal business of borrowing from Broadway. When the company staged Fay Kanin's 1948 comedy hit--Goodbye, My Fancy--Thomas Archer was moved to observe without enthusiasm that the production "pleased the audience and is the kind of fare MRT patrons like."<sup>196</sup> There followed an interesting and unusual pairing of plays in which Cocteau's version of the Oedipus story, The Infernal Machine, was followed by Antigone, Anouilh's conclusion of the story. The first play was a major production running the usual ten days and ending in early December. The legend was concluded with a Studio production a

few days later. Jean Béraud, reviewing for La Presse, was delighted by many aspects of The Infernal Machine, not least of which was the longevity of the company responsible. "On peut se sentir fier de voir à Montreal une scène atteindre son 21e anniversaire, et nous offrir une oeuvre d'envergure présentée par une troupe comparables aux meilleures venue de l'extérieure." <sup>197</sup> Christopher Plummer, now aged twenty, played Oedipus to such effect that Béraud was moved to prophecy:

M. Christopher Plummer est un acteur de grande classe. Son Oedipe est tour à tour candide, fougueux, atterré sous les coups du sort, et tout dans le jeu et le débit est en place. C'est vraiment là une interprétation magistrale, et l'on imagine aisément que ce jeune artiste <sup>198</sup> pourra faire une très grande carrière de théâtre.

Antigone, directed by Roeberta Beatty, had Yvette Brind'Amour in the title role. At this time the distinguished founder of the Théâtre du Rideau Vert was already running her own company though there would be some dark seasons in the early 'fifties before the Rideau Vert re-established itself with a run of successes enduring to the present day.

Mildred Mitchell, one-time star of Montreal's Orpheum Theatre, and former Producing Director of MRT, directed in January McEnroe's The Silver Whistle--a comedy which had rocked Broadway two years previously. Next came a magisterial presentation of A Doll's House for which public interest was sufficient to require an additional performance. In the cast

Jeannine Beaubien took a minor role. Before the decade was out she would found Montreal's International Theatre, La Poudrière, on St Helen's Island in the middle of the St Lawrence, where her program included plays in German and Spanish along with English and French.

The season ended with Giraudoux' fantasy/comedy, The Mad Woman of Chaillot, which held out some hope for mankind in the face of materialism, as seen in the play, and in the face of immediate threats to existence itself experienced by the audience in those dark, Cold War days.

Looking back over the season the preponderance of French authors is remarkable. To round off the work, at a November meeting of the Theatre Club members were treated to a lecture by Aaron Frankel who had just returned from Europe after a year of studying French theatre. <sup>199</sup>

Studio productions in the season were memorable for Antigone mentioned above, and Blood Wedding which seems to have left its audience somewhat disappointed. Harold Whitehead felt the company "deserved praise for their bravery" (in mounting the production) while finding the script "static, <sup>200</sup> repetitious and just a little tedious."

CUE's front-page editorial in March 1951 put the artistic successes of the season into grim perspective with its opening sentences:

MRT is facing a crisis. Our books predict a loss this year of \$4,000. If we were a commercial undertaking, our "crisis" would be easily solved. We would go over our books as carefully as we could.

We would size up our deficit. And we would meet it either by raising our prices or--if that were impossible commercially--we would darken the theatre and close the door quietly behind us as we went out. Finis.

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This solution was out of the question. The MRT was not the "plaything of a wealthy clique," and was needed particularly by the young who would not be able to afford higher prices. "If we fail them now," the writer insisted, "we will lose the chance of passing on to another generation what we have learned to prize." The Editorial concluded that an emergency fund had to be raised to keep MRT in existence. If this was not the answer, alternative proposals had to be found.

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In the same issue is a copy of the moving speech made by librarian Marie Stehle at an emergency meeting held to discuss the crisis. Stehle was strongly opposed to raising prices. In her view the work of MRT "is to help create the discriminating and critical audience that Canada must have if there is ever to be a Canadian theatre worth the name." This audience, she maintained, was to be found amongst the young. Since private enterprise (as opposed to public subsidy in Europe) was the North American way of taking care of physical needs (hospitals), intellectual needs (colleges and universities) and religious needs,--thus cultural needs (music and theatre) needed to find similar support from private enterprise. She continued by proposing a course of

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action; and her words must have stung the ears of MRT's dilettante title holders:

We need a campaign of enlightenment and we need to start it right here at home. I suggest that those who have the responsibility here take an intensive course at MRT. You already understand something about the work of the players. Learn for yourselves the discipline and devotion of the backstage workers. See what is put into all the unglamorous jobs by people whose names you may not even bother to read in the programs, but whose faithful,<sup>204</sup> painstaking work makes our productions possible.

We have to wonder what "those who have the responsibility here" had been doing while the financial crisis was building up. Stehle finished with an exhortation to them to visit the School and see the enthusiastic students, to visit the library and find out what the theatre had been through in 2,000 years, to "get a vision of what it might be to Canadians. And then go out and raise money."<sup>205</sup>

The deficit at the end of May 1951 was two and a half thousand dollars. Somewhere the company found enough courage to open a new season.

#### Twenty-Second Season: 1951-1952

The fall of 1951 found MRT on the road. An arrangement had been made that Montreal's Rotary Club would sponsor special performances which would take place in locales considered as suburbs of Montreal. This happened in the case

of Home at Seven, a drama by R.C.Sheriff, which moved from Guy Street after the regular ten-performance run to the Town of Mount Royal High School auditorium. It was a move from a 19-foot proscenium opening to one of 32 feet, and to a stage well-equipped with fly lines. The influence of MRT's Charles Rittenhouse was abundantly apparent in the Montreal School Board's decision to equip the auditoriums in their new high schools with magnificent theatrical facilities. Rittenhouse directed the next major production--The Curious Savage--done in New York the previous winter. The third major in January was Shaw's comedy, You Never Can Tell. A sell-out at Guy Street compelled an additional performance before the company moved on to its fund--raising activities on behalf of the Rotary Club.

For reasons which will become apparent, the group's Studio work to this point in the year will be considered here rather than later. In December the powerful personality of Eugene Jousse was seen in action as he directed at MRT for the first time, in a Studio double bill of Sartre's The Respectable Prostitute and Chekhov's The Marriage Proposal. Jousse had earned his M.A. in Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina before returning to Montreal to make a name for himself directing arena productions at McGill University. Yvette Brind'Amour won praise for her interpretation of the prostitute's role, as did Henry Ramer as the Senator. <sup>206</sup>

March 1, 1959 saw the final Studio performance of Giraudoux' play, The Enchanted, in which William Shatner, a key member of the early Stratford troupe and later to

achieve world--wide television fame as Captain Kirk in Star Trek, made a rare appearance with MRT. Preparations were in hand for the next major production--Mary Chase's comedy, Harvey, when the entire MRT building burned down.

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Goodbye to Guy Street

The Montreal Herald's headline for Wednesday March 5 1952 reads "HUNDREDS FLEE RAGING FIRE ON GUY STREET".<sup>207</sup> Two women who lived in apartments above the theatre were killed, and from seventy burned-out apartments in the adjacent building more than three hundred men, women and children were driven out into the snow-filled streets. Amongst the many individual tragedies it was the disaster for MRT which attracted the major attention of the press. Every newspaper declared its pride in the company as a prime Montreal asset.

Within hours practical help was pressed on the management. The Directors held their first emergency meeting at noon of March 5; by one o'clock the Mount Royal Hotel had provided an office and phone; desks and filing cabinets were in place by the end of the day. Very shortly more than \$2,000 was donated in order to help the company pull itself together.

The damage was appalling. Costumes, props and electrical equipment were a total loss. Worst of all, because many of the objects lost were literally irreplaceable, was the destruction of the Community Players Theatre Library. Yet to this aspect of MRT operations, as to all others, help was given unstintingly. The company's will to survive was immediately obvious. As the phone list was destroyed the first appeal was

for members to call in so that this vital tool could be reconstituted. Rehearsals for Harvey were resumed in a new locale in Victoria School on St Luke Street. Immediate offers of assistance came from Les Compagnons de St Laurent who would give a benefit performance of their current production, as would the Canadian Art Theatre, Barry Morse and his company, and the McGill Players Club. The Canadian Legion and the C.P.R. made other offers including cash, accommodation and equipment; all were accepted. MRT had nothing except a single asset--the spirit which had kept it going through twenty-two years of hard slogging, in a city largely indifferent to the company's achievement. It was enough. Thomas Archer quotes a distinguished American impresario visiting Montreal at the time of the fire and records his amazement:

Montreal is the largest city in the country, a cultural centre to which we all look. But you apparently don't know your own worth. You neglect the only lasting thing you have. You don't even house it decently, you put your theatre in a dance hall and your symphony orchestra in a school room. 208

Now the ballroom no longer existed. Fate, working through a pyromaniac policeman, had given a fresh start to MRT by freeing it from the intolerable burden of trying to make the tiny Guy Street theatre a financial success.

#### Winding up the Season

Despite catastrophe preparations for the season's major productions went forward with something like serenity. Harvey,

originally advertised to open at Guy Street on March 20th, premiered at the Town of Mount Royal High School a mere twelve days later. Of course the company had the advantage of familiarity with the theatre from its Rotary-sponsored productions earlier in the season. The last major work was a Philip Barry comedy from 1951, Second Threshold. The lead was taken by Barry Morse, an actor from Britain on the way to a lengthy international career, who had caught the eye of the public the previous summer in a Noel Coward comedy at the Mountain Playhouse. Roeberta Beatty directed, and Thomas Archer found "the MRT (is) maintaining its standards." 209

Studio projects were not neglected after the fire, though a proposed production of Hauptman's Hannele, intended for the ballroom of the McGill Students Union, had to be postponed for the moment. The novelty of this work for MRT was to be its production in-the-round. A Studio revival of An Enemy of the People was mounted in Trinity Memorial Hall, home of the Trinity Players. In this production there was an appearance by Pauline Rathbone, who continues to date to provide theatre work and training for Montreal's teenagers and younger students in her Rathbone Theatre.

To round off the year MRT held a public meeting in the Windsor Hotel on June 18 to discuss plans and to offer those interested a progress report on arrangements since the fire. 210  
The Theatre Club and School of the Theatre would find space in St. Stephen's Church, Westmount. Office and library space had been secured in the Mechanics' Institute. Studio productions and publication of CUE would continue. After six

years of dedicated work as Producing Director, Doreen Lewis had resigned and was leaving Montreal. Her position would be taken by Olive de Wilton, a woman of lengthy experience who had toured with Frank Benson, operated her own companies for years, and had managed professional theatres in London, the United States and Canada. Two new enterprises are worth mentioning. The School of the Theatre had expanded by setting up a branch in the Town of Mount Royal, thus providing a service beyond the mountain. A totally new departure was the founding of the Ladies Auxiliary which raised money by providing hospitality at a price throughout the year at such events as the At Home in the Fall. A highlight of their year was the Christmas Tea and Bazaar about which the organizers 211 concluded, "there must be an easier way to raise money." Despite the calamity MRT was only winded, not knocked out. They would be back on their feet for another round when September arrived.

\* \* \*

Chapter 6

On The Road: 1952-1957

Twenty-Third Season: 1952-1953

The arrangement with the Rotary Club continued in the new season. The first production opened in Victoria Hall for two performances and then moved to Westhill High School for the sponsored performances. This comedy, Traveller's Joy, was followed first by a thriller, The Late Edwina Black, and next by a Studio production of Tartuffe directed by Guy Beaulne, using Miles Malleeson's idiomatically entertaining translation. Beaulne's career had brought him awards for acting and directing with Le Caveau of Ottawa after his studies in Paris. Thereafter he held a number of important posts in the theatrical world. <sup>212</sup> Jack Crisp, taking a minor role, would later prove a prolific playwright at La Poudrière. Shaw's Pygmalion and O'Neill's Anna Christie wound up the season, each of them moving from Victoria Hall to Westhill High School. Yvette Brind'Amour directed the O'Neill play.

The homeless company had completed a season of five major plays, together with two other Studio productions. March brought a two-evening bill of "Three Canadian One-Act Plays" which was followed in April by Bridie's comedy, Mr Bolfry, in Victoria Hall. This production, advertised as a 'Rehearsed Reading,' was to capitalize on an audience whose appetite had been whetted by a reading of Shaw's Don Juan in Hell at His Majesty's Theatre in November 1951. Alas the comparison was unfair. The readers on that occasion were mature professionals

--Agnes Moorehead, Charles Laughton, Charles Boyer and Sir Cedric Hardwicke--working comfortably together in the course of a lengthy tour. MRT had twice as many speakers on stage--none of them with the experience of the famous visitors. Directing on this occasion was Norma Springford, a veteran with much experience directing theatre-in-the-round productions, especially with McGill students. The previous summer she had been appointed Director at the Mountain Playhouse--a position she would hold until the theatre was closed by the city of Montreal some years later. Curiously, in view of her experience and importance in the world of Montreal theatre, Springford's name is not found as director in any subsequent MRT major or studio productions.

On the business side familiar noises were being made. A letter to members dated 29 May 1953 summarized the recent past. A Special General Meeting had been held in the Windsor Hotel on April 14 at which an almost completely new Board of Directors for MRT was voted in. Their meetings had come to the following conclusion: MRT can go on in this emergency year only by means of voluntary work for practically every operation. <sup>213</sup> Jean de Savoye was to be the new General Manager. On a later page members were told, "We are eliminating the General Manager's salary as an emergency measure." Also eliminated are Studio performances since:

....these productions do not bring in sufficient revenue to justify the very large number of man-hours they require over and above the time and

effort needed to produce five first-class majors.  
 We simply cannot afford Studio productions for  
 the present.

At this time the practice of numbering Major productions from the founding of the company came to an end with Production No. 137, Anna Christie.<sup>215</sup> CUE was to remain, but in a modified form. Amongst details of new membership proposals is information regarding the "Simplified Arrangements" for ordering tickets. The former "great tax nuisance" will disappear. "Yes, we still have to pay amusement tax, but you won't be bothered any more by having to put 19 or 38 cents in an envelope when ordering your seats."<sup>216</sup> Putting cents in an envelope seems closer to Victorian church-going than twentieth-century theatre attendance.

#### Twenty-Fourth Season: 1953-1954

The ecclesiastical tone was resumed in the Fall with a production of Shaw's Saint Joan. Montreal's great French actress, Denise Pelletier, with MRT for the first time, played Joan. She was already well-experienced, having worked with Les Compagnons, and Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, and appeared in Gélinas' Ti-Coq and CBC radio and television productions. As with all the major productions of the season there was a four-night, Wednesday to Saturday, run in the well-equipped West Hill High School. This straightforward arrangement must have come as a relief after some of the dizzy scheduling of recent seasons. Lindsay and Crouse's Life with Mother followed --a comedy--between the drama of the mediaeval church and the

drama of Rattigan's The Deep Blue Sea. Bruce Raymond, soon to become Managing Director of MRT, made a rare appearance in this last play. Another comedy, His Excellency, brought a reminder of the fading spectacle of British imperialism. Cicely Hessey-White, the director, had first played with MRT in 1938. Arthur Voronka designed the set as he had for the season's three earlier productions. This energetic young man was responsible for more than twenty set designs for MRT and an astonishing number for virtually every other Montreal company.

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Guy Beaulne, who had directed MRT's last Molière--Tartuffe--in 1952, brought his experience in French theatre to the season's last work--Molière's The Miser,--once again in Malleson's hilarious translation. Tartuffe had been entered in the Western Quebec Regional Drama Festival where it won awards for visual presentation; for the best entry in the language other than that of the winning production; for best male actor (Ronald Kinsman); and, for best supporting actress. (Marion Dennis).

While Studio productions were suspended for the time being, experimental work did not stop. Using the YWCA Auditorium a series of Theatre History presentations was arranged, beginning in the Fall with an Evening of Roman Theatre. Roeberta Beatty gave an illustrated introduction which was followed by a bare-stage version of Plautus' comedy, The Menaechmi. Later in the year Guy Beaulne presented an Evening of Theatre in the Middle Ages which included a reading of the mediaeval play, Adam.

Jean Béraud attended the Restoration evening introduced by John Hoare which featured a directed reading of Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife. Béraud remarks on the audience's authentic thirst for theatrical knowledge:

Lecture agréable, intelligente, dans le beau cadre de la salle de spectacle de la YMCA....Il y avait bien là environ 300 auditeurs, ce qui montre bien comme le MRT a réussi à attirer vers la culture par l'art dramatique une élite prête à se passer de décors, de costumes et d'éclairage au profit de l'oeuvre même à l'étude.<sup>218</sup>

In the early part of the season members were saddened by the death of Whitfield Aston, a businessman and gifted actor with more than forty years of stage experience in Montreal. When Martha Allan launched her theatre, "MRT," according to the Montreal Star, "got the unflagging support and co-operation of a veteran on the stage whose versatility in widely differing roles and experienced stagecraft was of great value to the organization from its early and difficult years onward."<sup>219</sup> Another loss to MRT came with the death of Filmore Sadler in December. Louis Mulligan, in his Gazette memorial notice, saluted Sadler as a man "who painstakingly sought perfection in his art."<sup>220</sup>

In the straitened circumstances (which forced MRT to turn down an invitation to participate in the DDF as the effort to do so would have meant short-changing their subscription members) the School of the Theatre also had to reduce its activity. Operations at the Van Horne High School in Town of

Mount Royal continued as before, but in the Mechanics Institute only the Senior School under Jean de Savoye was giving classes. Even this limited service was confined to no more than three branches of theatre--Ray Cunnington looked after Diction and Classical interpretation; Winifred Dennis was responsible for Modern and Comedy interpretation; and Cynthia Michaelis took care of Voice and Diction.

At the end of the season Jean de Savoye was commended in CUE for her work as General Manager:

...the Box Office has functioned smoothly on a new plan. A new Board of Directors has received complete figures on each production and reports on all aspects of MRT's activities. In twelve months MRT's red figures have changed to black. Membership has increased and the Box Office receipts are twice  
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what they were last year.

The School had been made to show a profit, and CUE had been restructured so that the magazine content was incorporated into each play program instead of being a separate publication. Charles Rittenhouse, already Production Manager, had also taken on the arduous work of Acting-President, to which he brought twenty years of intensive theatre experience.

Despite the success of the season MRT found itself facing a future which held yet another question mark. Jean de Savoye had resigned her voluntary position as General Manager. Her place would be taken by Gwyn Williams, who had acted as Assistant Secretary-Treasurer for some months. Bravely she was

to combine the two positions of General Manager and Secretary-Treasurer. CUE's editor wished her Good Luck.

Post-Script to the 1953-1954 season

Unusually for MRT there was a production in August as part of the annual Montreal Festivals. Many members of the cast of Saint Joan, including Denise Pelletier, took the same parts that they had played in the October production. A clue is given in a Sally Starke manuscript as to why members of the company would have been interested in this work. The document in question is a contract signed by Jean de Savoye (as Manager for MRT for this production) offering \$60 for playing the Duchesse de la Tremouille for the six performances. The notion of payment for MRT actors was an attractive innovation which would have serious consequences in the future. For the same production Rittenhouse would earn a thousand dollars as Director. <sup>222</sup> In the fall of 1955 the company would have in its advertising material: "MRT--the first Canadian Community <sup>223</sup> Theatre to add a professional wing."

Twenty-Fifth Season: 1954-1955

The Twenty-Fifth Season was planned as an economy model like its predecessor. There would be five major productions, each running four nights in West Hill High School. The Studio would remain in abeyance, and the Theatre Club would take care of any experimental work. Arthur Miller's modern classic, The Crucible, directed by Eugene Jousse, opened the season. Local performance rights were obtained from Miller through Madeleine Sherwood, a former MRT actress, who had

played Abigail in the 1953 Broadway opening. The director designed the settings which were executed by Griffith Brewer who, as actor, designer and set-constructor, has probably more MRT credits over the years than anyone except Martha Allan. The settings won applause for their "cleanness of line and sense of period." <sup>224</sup> Walter O'Hearn, reviewing for the Montreal Star was unhappy with the script. "As to Mr. Miller's play, I still have misgivings," he complained. "He seems to me to be grinding a political axe and to be operating within his own set of bigotries." <sup>225</sup>

The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary production in November was the comedy, Captain Carvalho, directed by Cicely Hessey-White. She had studied at R.A.D.A. and at the Royal Academy of Music before obtaining considerable professional theatre experience in England. A mystery drama from that country--Bonaventure--which followed, was directed by Bruce Raymond. March brought The Devil's Disciple which Thomas Archer described as "beautifully staged and enormously stimulating....one of the finest shows the MRT has given in its long career." <sup>226</sup>

For the third successive season there was a Malleson version of Molière--The School for Wives--this time directed by Stephen Porter of McGill University's Department of English. The Theatre Club presented in December a couple of evenings at the YMCA Auditorium of "Selected Scenes from Shakespeare and other Distinguished Elizabethans", directed by Eleanor Stuart and featuring her in several of the extracts. With material by Marlowe, Jonson and Webster this looks like a

production planned for the previous season of Theatre History. Eleanor Stuart by this time had settled comfortably into the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of which she was a welcome and respected member. A tribute in the April CUE tells of her general outlook towards theatre and her readiness to be of service in the face of a theatrical emergency:

Last month, Miss Stuart received a long-distance telephone call at 10 p.m. on a Thursday, from MRT. As soon as she knew that we had a desperate hour to fill the next evening, she agreed to come and help us. She boarded a train the next morning, travelled all day from Toronto, and stepped on stage at West Hill on Friday evening to hold our audience in absolute stillness while she gave a beautiful and moving reading of Alice Duer Miller's "Forsaking All  
227  
Others."

As so often the financial news was bad. The posts of General Manager and Production Manager (held by volunteers in the previous season) had been taken over by a salaried worker, Patricia Coe. General operating expenses were up; operating revenues were down. The contrast between this unfortunate situation and the success of the previous season was marked.

Twenty-Fourth Season - Operating PROFIT - \$2,100

Twenty-Fifth Season - Operating LOSS - \$2,600

The Treasurer expected a net deficit at the end of the season of about a thousand dollars. More revenue was needed. Increased prices were not the answer as there was space at

West Hill for 50% more audience than they were getting. Munro Brown, Editor of CUE at this time, exhorted members to do their duty. "Interest one friend," he urged, "in sending in a subscription for membership at the same time as you send in your own. Please don't leave this job to 'the other fellow' 228  
 .... make it your job to get one new member."

The same editorial refers to an MRT housing project under discussion with a reminder of the financial realities which had to be faced. "When we can come up with an operating profit, then, and only then, are we in a position to take on the added responsibility of a home of our own." 229

#### Twenty-Sixth Season: 1955-1956

This sober advocacy of the virtue of good housekeeping was abandoned without a backward glance when publicity material was prepared for the new season. With a more business-like approach to theatre management than MRT had shown previously, the company proposed a "Festival of Comedies" in which five productions were listed with performance dates. These included works by Priestley, Shaw and Wilde. The company lived up to its prospectus; in fact it exceeded its promise by adding extra performances for the last two shows. There was an inducement to subscribe before the end of September since costs would rise thereafter.

MRT's second initiative in that season was an expansion program with two aims:

Attainment of the first will result in a new home to replace the Guy Street Playhouse. The second

achievement will be the founding of a Professional Wing, where MRT graduates and others may act and work in a fully professional atmosphere. <sup>230</sup>

The explanation of this move towards selective professionalism is made with an attractive argument. The flyer lists Leo Ciceri, Richard Easton, Robert Goodier, Christopher Plummer and Eleanor Stuart as examples of once young and "struggling" talent which received encouragement from MRT and then moved on to professional spheres:

However, in spite of her contribution to these now professional artists, MRT can invite none of them back to play before the very audiences who first applauded their efforts. MRT is not a competitive, commercial theatre. <sup>231</sup>

Members were assured that Community Theatre would "continue to be MRT's 'raison d'être'--providing regular high quality stage entertainment by and for the citizens of Canada's largest city." <sup>232</sup>

This new dynamism at MRT coincided with the appointment of Bruce Raymond as Managing Director in August 1955 shortly after joining the Board of Directors. He came with impressive credentials. This McGill graduate worked in theatre with the Navy putting on troop shows in wartime productions. Later he worked as Business Manager for the Canadian Repertory Theatre in Ottawa, and as General Manager of the Mountain Playhouse in Montreal. He had acted in leading roles for MRT and had also directed for the company. He had experience of writing for radio and television, and was Chairman of the National

Theatre Conference, and Secretary of the Canadian Council of Authors and Artists. One of Raymond's reforms was to set up the new position of Technical Advisor, to which Eugene Jousse was appointed. His task was to organize and co-ordinate all production workers under one head. In the summer Jousse had chosen, directed and produced all six plays at the newly-formed Kingsmere (Ottawa) Festival of Arts. The third element in this renewal of leadership was Chrystie Douglas, who, unusually for a President, took an active part in all technical and creative sides of MRT's activities. He "read suggested plays and expressed opinions. He attended rehearsals and talked to players and backstage crew." He had even "gone abroad to interest new people in MRT, and added considerably to our number of Governors."<sup>233</sup>

Jean de Savoye--"this practical, creative, mercurial Scot"<sup>234</sup> --directed the season's first two plays at West Hill. In October the farce, My Sister Eileen, by Fields and Chodorov from 1940, ran four nights at Westhill, where it was followed in November by the Priestley farce When We Are Married. In the New Year Shaw's The Applegarth ran for six performances in the Van Horne Auditorium. The cast of the next play--The Time Of The Cuckoo by Arthur Laurents--included Alfred Dann, who had been in the 1930 production of the pre-MRT Montreal Theatre Guild. The season's last production was an eight-performance run of Lady Windermere's Fan at West Hill which gave the company the opportunity to fill more than five thousand seats. Before the production MRT learned that they had returned to a state of

imperial grace, as the Right Honorable Vincent Massey, C.H., Governor-General of Canada, had agreed to become Honorary Patron of the company. MRT had missed this connection with the centres of power in the twenty years since Lord Bessborough's departure.

The School of the Theatre was active in the season. Its director, Norman Williams, wrote a play, Dreams, which was presented after the main season by the Theatre Club. On the same bill, presented in the YWCA, was Fry's A Phoenix Too Frequent which offered a meaty contrast with the easily digested fare of the major productions. Perhaps it was this taste of more challenging material that prompted the choice of another Fry work to open the following season.

#### Twenty-Seventh Season: 1956-1957

The new season opened with the announcement that MRT would henceforth operate as a fully professional theatre. "The time has come," insisted Bruce Raymond, "for us to face the fact that Canada is developing a proper theatre of its own and developing it on professional lines. It is a good and healthy growth, I believe, and one which MRT should make every effort to abet."<sup>235</sup>

An article in the same issue further elaborates the background:

Radio, television and films have been using Canadian players on a professional basis since their start, and these offshoots of the living theatre have contributed to the development of native

artists. In MRT's opinion there is still an urgent need for the training and experience which only a stage and audience can provide. Although there are still comparatively few Canadian companies which have managed to operate successfully, MRT is confident that Montreal will recognize the importance of developing its own players, improving the standards of its local productions and developing its own English-speaking theatre. <sup>236</sup>

Ironically only a week previously Thomas Archer had spoken in much less sanguine terms of the treatment MRT had received from the city of Montreal in the past:

It has withstood the brunt of all the grumbling and criticism of a disgruntled public which, too often, has treated it as a scapegoat instead of what it has been, namely, our only sure source of a standard of theatre through the lean years. <sup>237</sup>

The newly professional MRT, on the strength of its successful program of comedies in the previous season, now advertised a "Season of Great Playwrights." The Van Horne Auditorium, smaller than West Hill, became their home. Six major productions were proposed, each to run four days one week and four days the next. The burden was nearly equal to that of the ten-day runs in Guy Street, but the earning potential was considerably greater. Nor were MRT's operations impeded at this time, as had often been the case, by trying also to find room for a busy season of Studio productions. The Lady's Not For Burning came first, bringing a kind of

comedy very different from the drawing room variety so often presented by MRT in the past. Broadway's recent hit, The Rainmaker (1954), an American comedy set in the West, earned Eugene Jousse this curious compliment from Walter O'Hearn:

He comes on at the beginning of each act to sing and play a little ballad. Not exactly a Greek chorus, more of a Dimitri Tiomkin chorus and another instance of stage borrowing from the films. Mr. Jousse has an agreeable light voice and the tunes are harmless, but mainly I admire him for his sportsmanship.  
238

January brought Shaw's Androcles and the Lion to Van Horne, together with Sorry, Wrong Number as a curtain raiser. Another Broadway comedy came next, Krasna's Kind Sir, followed by Ustinov's political fairy tale, The Love of Four Colonels. The action then moved back to Broadway for another comedy, The Remarkable Mr Pennypacker by Liam O'Brien. With this MRT brought to an end the second of two successful commercial seasons, each equally meriting the label--"Festival of Comedies."

Towards the end of this first professional season, Myron Galloway, guest-writing in CUE, looked back nostalgically to what English theatre in Montreal had been in the past:

....five, ten, fifteen years ago Montreal theatre (remember I refer only to the English theatre) was producing first class plays, giving actors an opportunity to learn their trade and giving theatre

goers something for their money in the bargain. In any season a generous helping of the classics was being presented--Ibsen, Shaw, Tchekov, O'Neill and Mr. Shakespeare, to name but a few, as well as the experimental moderns like Cocteau, Sartre and Lorca. All of this, plus some of the most outstanding hits from the New York and London stages.

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The editor of CUE rejected Galloway's charge that "fifth-rate scripts" were the usual current fare for Montreal theatregoers and pointed out that MRT's best attendance in the past two seasons had been for the 1940 Broadway comedy, hit, My Sister Eileen, in October 1955. Obviously the work had worn well.

The season's honours were divided between Arthur Voronka who designed sets for all the six major productions, and Eugene Jousse, who directed the experimental work--Brecht's The Good Woman of Setzuan. This Theatre Club production ran for three nights in February with a cast of more than thirty players. Brecht's ideas caused O'Hearn a degree of alarm:

Frankly, he is booting a propaganda notion about, and it is a pretty poisonous one. The gods are foolish, he seems to say, and their rules are dead. Only by exploiting others does man get by in an angry world. Man must discover a new set of rules.

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Despite this unhappy reaction and "players whose enthusiasm exceeds their skill," O'Hearn recognized that he had in fact treated this Club work as if it were a major

production and acknowledged that it was "worth doing...as an  
experiment." <sup>241</sup> The director tells us that the play had been  
under discussion for possible production for at least five  
years previously and had not till that time been considered  
suitable given the financial preoccupations of the company. It  
speaks well for the improving situation of MRT that these were  
no longer the controlling concerns. "What interests us  
most," explained Jousse, "is an audience before which to  
display, in our own way, the work of a playwright of more than  
thirty years standing whose work has yet to reach our local  
stage." <sup>242</sup>

MRT was doing what the times required to keep itself  
alive, and by putting Brecht on stage continued its practice  
of giving Montreal audiences works which they would not  
otherwise have a chance to see.

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Chapter 7

Fin de Partie: The Closse Street Playhouse: 1957-1961

Twenty-Eighth Season: 1957-1958

As in the previous season MRT began with a Fry comedy. The Nov. 23rd opening of Venus Observed was a late start awaited with interest by Montreal theatre-goers. The company, five years after losing its Guy Street theatre, had moved its operations into a former Navy League drill hall on Closse Street. Having a permanent home was a blessing, but "MRT was unfortunate," lamented Managing Director Bruce Raymond, "in that its bank balance was not black enough to attempt all the renovations and decorating it would have liked." <sup>243</sup>

Campaigning had brought substantial donations often accompanied by unsolicited contributions. The recently-formed Arts Council of Greater Montreal also "provided a little ballast against unforeseen circumstances." <sup>244</sup> Although renovations had reached the point at which the season could begin, much remained to be done. Raymond found the times propitious for theatre companies to find permanent homes: the Comédie Canadienne had recently taken possession of the transformed Gaiety Theatre, and the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde had settled in the Orpheum Theatre.

An event of the past summer provided MRT with further cause for pride. The permanent house at Stratford, Ontario, which replaced the Festival's Tent Theatre, opened on July 1 with Hamlet; the Prince was MRT's Christopher Plummer.

Back in Crosse Street audience-accommodation for Venus Observed was less than ideal, according to CUE:

The acoustics need improving, particularly on the edges of the auditorium. Clear viewing is not possible from all seats. Some seats have a bad habit of falling apart when sat in. And when it comes to our air circulation....!

\$12,000 had already been spent on renovations. Another \$12,000 would be needed before the foyer was comfortable, before all seats would have a clear view of the stage, and before checkroom and restroom facilities were in acceptable condition. Unfortunately the treasury was empty. Four other companies, however, had rented the facilities, so there was hope of some non-box office income. Also on the positive side, MRT activities (library, scene dock, workshops, Theatre Club, School of the Theatre) which had been scattered throughout the city could now be gathered under one roof. Some concerns inevitably surfaced amid the overall optimism. Was the location a good one, sited as it was just east of the Forum, virtually on the outside of the city--practically in Westmount? Was it a good idea to invest so heavily in rented property? In the relief at having a building these doubts were set aside.

In December MRT staged its first opera and gave Montreal a first chance to view Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors with Robert Savoie in the role of Melchior. Major Barbara followed in January, and proved so successful that an extra week of performances had to be arranged. Making her first MRT

appearance in this production was Beryl Lowe, a graduate of London's Central School of Speech and Drama. Lowe, who was teaching at MRT's School and for the Protestant School Board, had been Leader of the Chorus in Murder in the Cathedral when it was first staged in Canterbury Cathedral under Eliot's supervision. A recently popular Scottish comedy, The Lass Wi' the Muckle Mou', came next, followed by disaster.

The drain on funds had been too great; the company could not continue; all three plays remaining in the season were cancelled. Over the years MRT had become inured to adversity, and once again its survival instincts dictated what action to take. A workshop version of Wilder's By the Skin of Our Teeth was in preparation, and in order to satisfy subscribing members this production was pressed into service. Julia Murphy, a RADA graduate with twenty years of directing experience for Ottawa Little Theatre, and a director for the National Film Board, staged this production and the one which followed. This light comedy, Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?, by George Axelrod, author of The Seven Year Itch, brought the year to an end.

This bumpy season was accompanied by a change of management. Bruce Raymond joined the CBC, and Ray Cunnington, who had run the School of the Theatre for a number of years, took his place as Managing Director. Julia Murphy, Resident Director under Cunnington, aimed to create an ensemble company which she would direct. Since moving to Crosse Street a program for theatre apprentices had been providing useful help for the company and valuable experience

for the trainees. Murphy's intention for the 1958-1959 season was to present an unprecedented twelve plays.

While it may seem at this distance in time that the new Director's idealistic program was impractical, the arts were enjoying a revival in the city. The Montreal Symphony Orchestra, after twenty-five years of operation, was to become a permanent orchestra in the Fall, and planned to run an uninterrupted twenty-two week season from October to April. On the theatre front July saw the opening of La Poudrière--a theatre whose work would continue to the 1980's despite the handicap of a proscenium opening of 19 feet and seats for less than 200. In the light of MRT's ruinous Guy Street economics under similar physical conditions, this enterprise at the outset seemed to be offering fate a direct challenge.

#### Twenty-Ninth Season: 1958-1959

The start of the twenty-ninth season found Montreal attracting the attention of two internationally-known theatre organizations. Jean Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire, starring Gérard Philippe, visited the St Denis Theatre, and the New York Theatre Guild in association with the American Theatrical Society decided to add Montreal to their regular touring circuit. MRT, under Ray Cunnington's management, proposed its most ambitious program ever. The impetus seems to have come from Roger Flumerfelt, former vice-president and chairman of the Calgary Philharmonic orchestra, who had recently taken the same position at MRT. In a flyer circulated through the summer they published a list of fifteen plays of

which they intended to produce a dozen. Last on the list was "MRT's own musical revue," In the Red,--with the ironic invitation--"Maybe you'd like to help us write a happy ending to this ?"  
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Through the summer a crew of volunteers had laboured to complete renovations using donated funds and materials. Julia Murphy's production of Inherit the Wind opened the season, followed by Myron Galloway's 99 Times Around the Block, also directed by Murphy. We learn from Variety (in the "Shows Out of Town" section) that this work after starting as a "trim and lively" television success on CBC's French and English networks and also the London BBC, suffered by being adapted for the stage. "Chief asset of 99 Times is the excellent casting and the depressing, middle-class interior set designed by Griffith Brewer."  
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A novelty in October was a French play, Clérambard, with a French cast--speaking in English. Harold Whitehead noted that there were some problems with the accents.  
248 With an eye on the market the company in November mounted a production of Macbeth, the Shakespeare play currently on the high school curriculum. Macbeth ran for ten evening performances over two weeks together with two Saturday matinees, and resumed for a third week early in December. Pre-Christmas activities terminated with Vidal's Visit to a Small Planet, described by the Gazette as "the best production this season,"  
249 though the critic might also have noted MRT's achievement of already staging five plays in the season. For years five major productions were as many as the company could put together

over an eight or nine month season. In this hectic year a dynamic new management was only half-way through its program. By October Cunnington could see that MRT's ambitions were starting to pay off. "After a long period in the wilderness," he told a reporter, "the statistics themselves aren't exactly rosy, however, our situation has improved some twenty-thousand dollars since January." <sup>250</sup>

The New Year brought an original musical, Bill Solly's I Love Electra, for the first time since the Tin Hats, though this work found little favour with the critics. Two more comedies followed: Arms and the Man, and You Can't Take It With You. A comedy/drama, Speaking Of Murder, ended the official season. There had been a record nine major productions, not to mention a challenging Studio Production in which Robert Verniks of the Latvian State Theatre School directed Squaring The Circle by Valentin Kataev--originally written in 1928 for the Moscow Art Theatre.

The School of the Theatre was expanded this season to include a full-time curriculum with sessions each weekday. The traditional evening and Saturday classes continued. In twelve classes there was a total of 171 students. At the end of this busiest of seasons Roger Flumerfelt's financial report indicated that expenditures had been reduced while the total audience had doubled. Subsidies from the Québec government, the Montreal Arts Council and the Canada Council, plus support from private and business sources had enabled MRT to survive the critical year. Flumerfelt believed from his contacts that business and industry had a more receptive attitude than in

the past, and would heed requests for financial aid. The important new element was the huge increase of community support for MRT as measured by ticket sales. The company's major task now was to meet its capital payment problem in order to relieve the continual cash crisis inherited from the investment in Closse Street.<sup>251</sup>

A year earlier, when the financial trouble was at its worst, the Managing Director insisted on the correctness of MRT's chosen new professionalism:

In view of the fact that English-speaking Montreal provides very limited opportunities to professional actors, I feel it is our absolute duty to do what we can to retain our best ones--possibly by putting them under contract and at the same time developing new talent. On the other hand I can promise that no actor in this city--either professional or amateur --will ever find the doors closed to him. Let us concentrate on good acting--without worrying<sup>252</sup> whether it is so-called professional or amateur.

Cunnington did not survive beyond his single season as Managing Director, and when proceedings began in the Fall the position was again in the capable hands of Jean de Savoye. She was faced with a new threat common to all traditional Montreal entertainers. An advertisement in the Gazette's Show Pages of 14 March 1959 offered a Cable Television Service to homes in Town of Mount Royal, Hampstead, Côte des Neiges, and Sherbrooke near Guy Street. The terse note, "Other areas added<sup>253</sup> weekly," encouraged the idea that in-home entertainment

was the wave of the future--a particularly attractive prospect in view of Montreal's winter weather.

Thirtieth Season: 1959-1960

The season opened briskly with The Iron Harp, by J. O'Connor, a drama out of the Irish/English conflict from the earlier part of the century. Shaw's Misalliance followed, proving confusing to the audience. "In Misalliance," noted the Gazette critic, "there is so much chitchat and exchange of bright and witty things that when characters make dramatic exits, they stay away so long that we have difficulty remembering who they are or why they left." <sup>254</sup> Jack Crisp directed next a 1955 West End thriller, earning praise for production values. "MRT has lavished just as much care on the production of Dead On Nine," observed Harold Whitehead, "as it would on a much more serious theatrical effort." <sup>255</sup> Though coming late in the history of the company the words acknowledge the professional standards now assumed as normal.

The season continued with Melville's popular farce, Simon and Laura, from Britain, which brought their number of pre-Christmas productions to four, as compared with the previous year's record of five. The school curriculum play, Hamlet, featured Leo Ciceri as the Prince, and ran for three weeks in January with a number of special student evenings and matinees. Thomas Archer, who had seen quite a number of the company's one hundred and seventy-eight productions, felt that Hamlet was "far and away the best thing the MRT has given us in recent years." <sup>256</sup> A Broadway comedy, The Great Sebastians,

from Lindsay and Crouse, preceded The Importance Of Being Earnest in which Eleanor Stuart took the role of Lady Bracknell. Leo Ciceri played John Worthington and the direction was by Roeberta Beatty. This rich combination of talent made for a memorable production.

As the company successfully pursued its mission to please and instruct, the planned program suffered a brutal hiatus. All April productions were cancelled. A new City of Montreal by-law affecting theatres with more than 100 seats compelled MRT to close for alterations. When these were completed to the satisfaction of the City Planning Department there was time for only one more production in the season. Eleanor Stuart was again available and performed memorably as Miss Moffat in Emyln Williams' The Corn Is Green.

During the season the School of the Theatre grew in strength under the direction of Julia Murphy. The company was profiting from having all its activities in a single building, and also from the excellence of its corps of teachers, all of whom were "thoroughly trained and competent and active themselves in Montreal theatre, television, film and radio."<sup>257</sup> The example of these teachers demonstrated some career possibilities for Canadian theatre students. Cash-based professionalism was now part of the philosophy of the company. "MRT's School of the Theatre," claimed a company Flyer in the summer of 1959, "is providing a valuable springboard for students who wish to seek a living in Canada's<sup>258</sup> growing entertainment industry."

In its thirtieth season the company had managed to stage eight productions as compared with ten in the previous season. Roger Flumerfelt's report at the Annual General Meeting--he had replaced Christie Douglas who died unexpectedly a few days previously--contained good news. Box office receipts for the season's eight shows exceeded those of the previous season by 10% despite the shortened program. Income had also increased through grants from the Montreal Allied Arts Council, from the Province of Quebec, and from the Canada Council.<sup>259</sup> For the first time since moving into Closse Street the theatre had shown a net profit, which over the year amounted to \$8,875. In the previous year there had been a net loss of \$5,416. The new President was proud to announce an overall improvement in the MRT's financial position of \$14,292.<sup>260</sup> The company could look forward with some confidence to the future.

#### Thirty-First Season: 1960-1961

In the Fall MRT put its leadership in the hands of a richly experienced and capable Managing Director, Norma Springford.<sup>261</sup> At the time of her appointment to MRT she was involved in many activities, the most relevant being her eleven-year tenure as producer at Montreal's Mountain Playhouse.

When the season's program was announced it contained a number of ideas which sounded anything but conservative when compared with the cautious regime the company had been compelled to follow in the seasons of financial rigour. For the first time in years there were to be four experimental

productions by the Studio, which had been placed under the auspices of the re-organized MRT Theatre Club. In the Green Room there would be theatre lectures open to the public. A new concept to be explored was "the formation of a group of experienced theatre workers who will meet to study and rehearse under expert guidance in the MRT Playhouse. This group will present two productions to a public audience on MRT's busy stage." <sup>262</sup> The burst of activity sounded like MRT of the early 'thirties with its bewildering variety of activities which increased in number every year.

Six plays were planned for the season which opened with Maxwell Anderson's drama, The Bad Seed, whose 1954 Broadway production had been followed by a popular movie. A costume drama of the French Revolution followed--The Public Prosecutor by F. Hochwalder--directed by Powys Thomas, who, with Jean Gascon, was a Director of the newly opened National Theatre School. Jack Crisp next directed a comedy about the New York fashion industry--The Fifth Season by Sylvia Regan. The pre-Christmas part of the season closed with a production, by the recently-revived Studio organization, of Ionesco's then novel plays--The Chairs and The Lesson. Charles Rittenhouse, who had not directed locally since 1953, was moved to take charge of this production. Robert Russel of The Montrealer magazine offers one view of MRT's experience with this double-bill:

With a certain scepticism this conservative company yielded to critical pressure and timidly offered an 'experimental' evening of Ionesco plays along with

their student productions. To their surprise, but certainly not mine, their box-office was flooded with an impossible number of ticket requests, many from those who refuse to attend MRT's regular fare. Reluctantly the production was extended a further three evenings, with similar response. According to the underground the receipts for the four evenings were a good deal more than their best receipts for their two-week professional productions of standard plays. They're winning new friends in spite of themselves.<sup>263</sup>

The following production, Roar Like A Dove by Lesley Storm, was praised in Montreal's CURRENT EVENTS magazine as a "delightful comedy .... It is a very light play, quite lacking in depth but it definitely entertains."<sup>264</sup> The Montrealer's patronising attitude to the company (quoted above) was shared by this reviewer who earlier in his piece described MRT as "a company which has largely catered to its Westmount subscribers and first-year English professors by performing standbys like Hamlet and The Importance of Being Earnest."<sup>265</sup>

Continuing its adventures into Theatre of the Absurd, MRT's next major production was Pirandello's Henry IV with Leo Ciceri directing and playing the lead. Written in 1922, a year after Pirandello's best known play, Six Characters in Search of an Author, it was a work as experimental as any written by Ionesco in the 'fifties. Was it reasonable of The Montrealer's reviewer to describe this company as acting "timidly"? The question is academic. While Henry IV was in

preparation, the Navy League, owners of the Closse Street property in which MRT had made its second permanent home, sold the building. On 4 March 1961, the curtain finally closed on the Montreal Repertory Theatre.

Winding Up: 1961-1966

Some weeks earlier the Directors had tried to shock members into understanding the gravity of the company's situation. In a letter dated 29 January 1961 they announced a Special General Meeting for March 20 at which the board would move a motion to surrender the company's charter. <sup>266</sup> A personal letter to members from Roger Flumerfelt, the President, listed questions--many of which had been part of MRT's psyche for three decades--to be raised at the meeting.

--Do the purposes for which MRT was founded still exist?

--Is an English-speaking professional theatre in Montreal desirable or necessary?

--Is our cultural and entertainment contribution to this community sufficient to justify the public support required for efficient operations?

--Is there enough tangible evidence of financial support from box office ticket sales, special contributions by individuals, and from government grants to justify the substantial financial risks of professional theatre?

--Will these funds be provided in sufficient quantity and at such advance times as will permit efficient planning,

and programming of productions and promotion?

--Can Montreal hold an adequate nucleus of English-speaking players to maintain a professional theatre?

--Is it desirable for MRT to own its own Playhouse?

--Is there still a need for the MRT School of the Theatre? <sup>267</sup>

The President noted that since achieving professional status the MRT was no longer a small-time operation, dealing as it did with an annual operating budget in excess of \$60,000. Because a matter of civic pride and community culture was at stake, the Montreal Board of Trade and all Service Clubs had <sup>268</sup> been asked to indicate their position vis-à-vis the MRT.

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At the end of the meeting the Charter survived, and so did MRT--on paper. Early in 1963 a Pilot Committee of old hands held meetings at which a handful of officers and members discussed headquarters, available talent, and a possible production schedule of three plays for the 1963-1964 season. This would involve a likely expenditure of \$20,000 against <sup>269</sup> projected income of \$6,000. The apparently suicidal situation had to be faced as there could be no support from the Montreal Arts Council until after a season of plays had been offered to the public.

The latest document discovered in which there are signs of life in MRT is the announcement of a Special General Meeting to be held on 22 April 1966. The Board of Directors was not short of talent and experience, composed as it was of such one-time luminaries as Sally Starke, Kay Tremblay, John

Pratt and Jean de Savoye. Yet two items indicate how radically times had changed. The plan of action proposed was to re-establish the name of MRT before the public by marketing top-quality professional productions under MRT's auspices. A damning sentence in the proposal would never have been penned by any previous MRT Board. "The productions would be purchased package shows chosen from wherever necessary." <sup>270</sup>

The second item of interest in the announcement is the place chosen for the meeting. How could this once majestic theatre company, if it still retained any sense of integrity or even good public relations, conceive of discussing its future in the Green Room of CFCF Television ?

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Chapter 8MRT and French Theatre

Montreal's French-language theatre scene at the opening of the 'thirties was bleak. Many of the theatre buildings were transformed into movie houses. College productions were to be seen, but they had no pretensions to high standards. Touring companies no longer visited because of exorbitant freight rates. French audiences were obliged to rely almost entirely on a thin diet of melodrama and boulevard comedy from France. Yet there were a few local writers, whose theatrical work was unfortunately not destined to last, who were to have a vital function in the development of Québec theatre. Their principal virtue, according to Jean Béraud, author of a history of French-Canadian theatre covering three hundred and fifty years, is that they threw away their history books, "pour chercher autour d'eux les thèmes de leurs pièces." <sup>271</sup> Some of these writers--Léopold Houlié, Henri Letondal, Yvette Ollivier Mercier-Gouin--produced work which seemed at the time likely to be of lasting value. From a post-war perspective the works appear somewhat artificial, dealing as they do with externals, but they were a considerable improvement over what had gone before.

In August 1930, two months before the first production of the re-named MRT, the former Chanteclerc cinema was taken over by the Barry-Duquesne company, renamed the Stella, and opened as a home for live weekly repertory. This conversion to live theatre did not so much initiate a trend as indicate a

direction in which commercial investors believed audiences were ready to go. Statistics are available to show the relative capacity of theatres and movie houses within a couple of years. Fifty-seven cinemas had 59,044 seats. Three theatres had 2,675 seats. In addition there was a handful of other halls which could be used for live theatre, provided there was little in the way of scenery. This total capacity had to serve a population of over one and a quarter million citizens.<sup>272</sup>

The chief adversary of theatre was the church, with its long history of banning attendance at stage works judged to be immoral. Theatrical talents given to a young person were usually regarded as a very mixed blessing. "Les parents, les éducateurs," recalls the writer Jacques Leduc, "loin de constater avec joie ce don de Dieu....travaillèrent toujours et de toutes leurs forces contre les vues de la Providence, soit par un ordre formel à l'enfant de ne jamais s'occuper de théâtre....soit en lui confiant les rôles faits pour l'abêtir, pour le dégouter vite et bien des grandes tragédies où comédies classiques."<sup>273</sup> Leduc pours scorn on fifty years of church-mutilated texts which passed for the works of Molière, Corneille and Racine on the stages of colleges and parish halls.<sup>274</sup> Even the Stella with its light popular fare was forced to shut its doors in 1935 for lack of a public.

Two years later nothing had changed. "En 1937 la situation est....désespérée," lamented critic Jean Hamelin. "Point de public. Point de théâtre résolument professionnel. Situation de travail déplorable pour le comédien, voué aux studios de la

radio, et jouant souvent selon ses moyens naturels, sans préparation de conservatoire ou d'école d'art dramatique." <sup>275</sup>

At this low point Fr. Emile Légault founded Les Compagnons de St. Laurent, the prime root-stock from which most present-day Canadian theatre in French developed. Over a number of years Légault's work passed through the limitations of strictly Christian drama, which he at first imposed on himself, to build a repertory "of high merit," in Hamelin's opinion, "with power to interest the youthful and enthusiastic public he wanted above all to reach." <sup>276</sup> If theatre could be rescued from the sad state into which it had fallen, "it might go in open-hearted search of poetry and dreams, of stylized expression and rediscovered play." <sup>277</sup>

The story of Les Compagnons is not the story of MRT, but it is a picture of where the breakthrough was to come for the development of an audience for theatre in French. Ten years after the founding of Les Compagnons, Légault was responsible for a production of Le Viol de Lucrece which, although diplomatically re-titled Lucrece, was nevertheless banned in Ottawa by Archbishop Vachon. On this occasion Légault made public his justification for choosing the play and provided a rationale in Christian and humanist terms which could be acceptable to churchgoers without compromising their principles. After tracing the influences on his company from Ghéon back to Copeau and his Vieux-Colombier, Légault declared himself in favour of:

....le théâtre tout court, religieux et profane, à condition qu'il fût un théâtre d'art bien en santé,

poétique, où le jeu et la convention entraient en composantes harmonisées." Enfin il s'autorisait de "l'évolution culturelle qui se manifestait de toute évidence au Canada français" pour légitimer la présentation de Lucrèce. "Un théâtre canadien" déclarait-il enfin, "reste encore à bâtir; nous réclamons pour lui un humanisme authentique, bien en santé, assez ouvert pour ne rebuter pas ceux que révolteraient de tatillonnes mises en garde.<sup>278</sup>

Certainly the crowds came to the French theatre which was now offered. When the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde was founded in 1951 by former members of Les Compagnons, they inherited an audience formed by Les Compagnons--an audience which was to expand at a great rate. Before 1950 there were no more than ten professional productions per season; in 1957 there were eighteen; in 1961 there were thirty-two. Over ten years the number of productions had tripled.<sup>279</sup> This progressive increase in French theatre, since the Stella's solitary struggles of the early 'thirties, owed a great deal to the efforts of the MRT.

Martha Allan, a bilingual woman with a strong sense of public duty and an understanding of Montreal's French and English communities, launched theatrical presentations in French less than twelve months after the establishment of her theatre company. MRT presented La Souriante Madame Beudet, by Amiel and Obey, in Victoria Hall in February 1931, and, at a private meeting closing the season in May, Guitry's one-act play, On Passe Donc Huit Jours, was presented. In May of the

next year a Workshop production presented a program of six one-acts over two evenings. The first evening included L'Erreur by Henri Letondal, who was to be a notable contributor to French theatre for many years. The next evening featured Le Retour Du Marquis by Tristan Bernard whose light comedies were very popular in France.

In January 1933 a Studio production of one-act plays presented works by local authors Robert Choquette, Léopold Houlié and Michel Seymour. In 1934 Choquette, working for the radio station, CRCM, became the first important author to present a series of theatrical radio works. The next significant play in French was MRT's thirteenth major production--Obey's comedy, Noé, presented in the spiritual home of French theatre, the Salle Academique of College Ste. Marie. This joint production with Les Anciens de Gesù included in its cast the playwright, Yvette Mercier-Gouin.

The 1933-34 season saw a fresh departure for MRT. Ferdinand Biondi, who had acted in several MRT productions, proposed that the company set up a Section Française under his direction. While continuing to take minor roles in productions in English, he became responsible for directing nine plays in French in the course of the year. Three of these were light Parisian pieces by Flers and Caillavet, and by Guitry; the rest were original Canadian plays. Between them the various pieces received twenty-three presentations according to Biondi's report on the year. <sup>280</sup> The sole full-length play, Le Cheval de Course by Henri Letondal, was

given three performances in June in a Studio production with Gratien Gélinas in the lead.

In the season there were parts for seventeen male and fourteen female actors. On the face of things this was an encouraging start, but the Director's report makes it clear that he was not heartened by his experience:

Ici nous devons faire face à de nombreuses et presque insurmontables difficultés....

1)--Le manque d'ambiance.

Expliquons-nous. Nous sommes dans un milieu anglophone. Tous sont très intéressés au mouvement français. Seulement il leur manque l'esprit français: ça ne s'acquiert pas en un seul jour. Il leur manque notre enthousiasme: il faut que ce soit inné.

2)--Le manque d'appui financier. Nous....devons monter nos spectacles avec le moins de dépenses possibles. Il n'est pas nécessaire de vous dire que c'est pratiquement impossible. La section française n'étant qu'une section pardessus le marché, nous devons nous contenter de ce que l'on nous donne.

3)--Notre mal vient surtout du fait que nous sommes dans l'impossibilité de rétribuer les acteurs.

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The difficulties described are inherent in the sad condition of French theatre at that time and certainly not in the relations between French and English speaking members of MRT. Biondi has more to add:

Le MRT sera toujours heureux d'accepter les suggestions de ceux qui veulent bien suivre son mouvement. Les auteurs canadiens seront toujours reçus à bras ouverts. Les artistes seront toujours traités avec bienveillance. Nous n'avons que notre amitié et notre expérience à leur offrir.

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Cut off from touring companies and from any flourishing Montreal theatrical activity in French, prospects for the future were not good. Biondi was proud of what his Section Française had managed to achieve in a single season, and particularly satisfied with the promotion of native writing talent. "Je défie toutes les organisations théâtrales de Montréal de présenter un rapport 'aussi canadien' que celui-là," he insisted.

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One item not mentioned in the report was the fledgling Dominion Drama Festival in which MRT entered Guitry's Les Deux Couverts. This play was selected for the Ottawa finals where the Section Française could display its accomplishments to a national audience. Much would grow from this initiative of the MRT. French talent in Montreal was available to the company because it offered the only game in town for amateurs. When Gélinas joined he did so because he wanted to improve his skills in an area of spare-time activity which interested him. He said the motivation was like that for joining a golf club. You did it for fun; you knew you could get better at it. There was no thought that it could ever become a means of earning a living.

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In later years when

he came to act at Stratford, he already had the experience at MRT of working with a company made up almost exclusively of English speakers.

After this season Biondi found work in Montreal's only professional French theatre with the Barry-Duquesne company at the Stella. His pay at the time was \$15 weekly for a season of 39 weeks in which a fresh piece had to be learned and presented every week. <sup>285</sup> His successor as leader of the Section Française was Yvette Mercier-Gouin followed by Henri Letondal, Dr. Honoré David and Mario Duliani.

In the following season there was no MRT entry, and no French entry by any company, in the Montreal Regional Finals of the DDF. In the 1936-37 season MRT went out strongly with a pair of entries from MRT proper and the Studio, while MRT Section Française entered the Western Quebec Regional Finals with René Berton's La Lumière Dans Le Tombeau--one of three plays presented by the company in that season. <sup>286</sup>

The 1937-38 season saw Henri Letondal producing one of Mercier-Gouin's plays, Un Homme, at His Majesty's Theatre, where it was billed as being "Under the Auspices of Martha Allan and the Montreal Repertory Theatre." This play ran for ten performances at a time when regular MRT productions usually ran for five. In March two original plays in French were entered by the Section Française in the DDF Regional Finals. Don Juan by Ernest Pallascio-Morin was eliminated at this point. Maldonne by Arthur Prevost went on to the national Finals in Winnipeg where it was awarded the Jackson trophy as best original Canadian play in the Festival.

The 1938-39 season brought a change of name to the Section Française which became the Théâtre Mont Royal. August 1939 found Martha Allan directing for an ad hoc company an outdoor production in French of Cyrano de Bergerac at the Chalet on Mount Royal. Cecil West of MRT designed the production which involved an acting company of more than 150 players including Yvette Brind'Amour. This undertaking seems to indicate that MRT still had the ability to mount French theatre and a willingness to use their resources in a common enterprise.

December 1939 saw the end of Théâtre Mont Royal for the duration of the war. The company lost a number of actors such as Pierre Gauvreau, and the Director, Mario Duliani, was sent to a preventive detention camp because of his Italian roots. <sup>287</sup> The last presentation of the period, which took place in the Hall of St Sulpice, was Canada's earliest dramatic work, Lescarbot's Le Théâtre de Neptune en Nouvelle France, The play was prefaced by a history of theatre in New France given by Robert Prévost, who would in time become widely known as a designer for the theatre.

During the war years the DDF ceased to function, and the MRT concentrated its efforts on major productions and the work of the Tin Hats. By 1950 enormous changes had taken place on the French theatrical scene. Les Compagnons--in action since 1937--had built an audience for French theatre, an audience which found no relevance in the attitude of the church. Gélinas had progressed from the revues, where he featured as Fridolin, to be the hero of his own Québec drama, Tit-Coq, in

1948. French-Québec theatre, while still continuing to do classics of far-away France, had developed a consciousness of its own North American French culture. There was no longer a need for the kind of support for French theatre which had been given in Montreal by MRT's Section Française. In 1950 the old name was revived for productions of La Folle de Chaillot and Pygmalion at His Majesty's Theatre, and in the following year Claudel's Christophe Colomb was entered in the DDF. But these events were looking towards the past rather than the future. Already in 1948 Les Compagnons had won the Martha Allan Trophy in the DDF for Anouilh's Antigone--leaving MRT's highly praised production of The Barretts of Wimpole Street in second place. In 1953, 1954 and 1955 Québec writers Marcel Dubé, Jean Filiatraut and again Dubé received the DDF's Grand Prix for original scripts. MRT no longer felt the civic duty of performing in French when such work was being more than capably handled by companies with a decade or more of experience behind them. Nor did this mean that MRT closed its eyes to the existence of the sister culture.

Relations between English and French theatre practitioners had for long been cordial to the point where those willing could readily work in the other language. MRT profited from the gifted direction of Pierre Dagenais, founder and producer of L'Equipe from 1943 to 1947, and of Guy Beaulne, especially in productions of Molière. Actresses such as Denise Pelletier, Jeanine Beaubien, and Yvette Brind'Amour played parts worthy of their talents in MRT English productions; MRT directors, including Martha Allan and Rupert

Caplan, directed plays in French for French companies in Montreal. MRT regularly chose plays from the French repertoire--Giraudoux, Cocteau, Anouilh; the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde and the Comédie Canadienne likewise included in their repertoire plays done in English.

MRT's unique contribution to Montreal's French language theatre lay in nurturing it at a time when there was no alternative. In the years since 1933 there have been radical changes in the demographics of Montreal and in the political outlook of its English and French citizens. Through the sheer presence of so many French speakers in one city a French-Canadian theatre would have been born in time. The midwifery of Martha Allan and her MRT served to shorten the labour and enabled the newborn infant to announce his arrival with loud and confident voice.

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Chapter 9The Community Players Theatre Library

One aspect of the Montreal Repertory Theatre's community work began years before the company started and continues to the present day. From 1939 to 1961 MRT were the custodians and operators of the Community Players Theatre Library--an institution which takes us back to the Fall of 1920. Building on the work of two earlier post-war companies the Community Players mounted productions over a period of four years. The company's philosophy was "to facilitate the production of plays dealing with Canadian life, or written by Canadian authors. <sup>288</sup> Martha Allan, Rupert Caplan and John Hoare worked with the group till lack of suitable premises forced it out of business.

The assets of the Community Players company, when it folded in 1924, amounted to about \$300 and were left in trust with the Bank of Montreal. In 1939 this fund was given to MRT by the bank for the purpose of starting a theatre library. Administration was in the hands of Louis Mulligan and Rupert Caplan with Marie Stehle as librarian. <sup>289</sup> Already in MRT's hands was the Walker Collection of photographs, prints and playbills assembled by a former manager of Her Majesty's Theatre in Montreal. <sup>290</sup> The existence of the library and its accompanying theatre museum meant that MRT could start a service for theatre lovers in Montreal and further afield, as well as provide study material for its own artists and designers.

Many of the library's assets came from donations. On the death of Martha Allan her entire collection of theatrical books, together with many "irreplaceable documents, costumes and historic heirlooms from the Martha Allan home," became the property of the library.<sup>291</sup> "Two hundred books," noted librarian, Marie Stehle in April 1948, "have come in since last October first--new plays and rare old ones, handsomely illustrated volumes on the various arts of the theatre and scholarly works on history."<sup>292</sup>

The library was devoted to the dramatic arts in both the French and English languages. A unique collection of Canadiana featured hundreds of early Canadian plays in both languages. A 1952 review of the acquisitions, made at the time fire destroyed the Guy St. premises, mentions Racinet's century-old work on theatrical costuming valued at \$100 for each of its four volumes. The personal libraries of Sir Henry Irving and Sir John Martin-Harvey were the source of a number of volumes which bore the signatures of the former owners, and in some cases hand-written notes. The complete works of Bernard Shaw were on the shelves, magnificently printed and bound in the Ayot St. Lawrence edition--a gift from Martha Allan.<sup>293</sup>

After the fire, which destroyed between four and five thousand books, a new wave of donations helped compensate for the loss. "Over two thousand books," records CUE, "three-act and one-act plays, reference books on the theatre, books on ballet, volumes of monologues, radio plays and odds and ends of curious information--poured into the small space which MRT had set aside out of its own small office for the library."<sup>294</sup>

One valued benefactor at this time was the play-publishing company, Samuel French, which donated seven hundred and fifty volumes to the library.<sup>295</sup>

MRT was performing a similar kind of service to that of the British Drama League in keeping multiple copies of plays for reading. "These were loaned out to individuals and groups in such distant points as Arvida and Kenogami in Quebec, and Deep River and Brockville in Ontario."<sup>296</sup> Subscribing groups in 1952 numbered about forty.

Five years after the fire the number of volumes had risen to around 4,000. The library had received a special donation of a document collection assembled over a twenty-five year period by a researcher interested in Shakespeare and his age. Sets of full-length plays available for loan numbered about fifty titles, to say nothing of a dozen one-acts. These multiple copies had been requested from as far away as Campbellton, New Brunswick. Amongst reference resources was a clipping-file of reviews of new plays where an interested reader could learn how Miller's latest work was received by New York critics, or what was said in London about Ustinov's most recent novelty. A detailed catalogue had been developed since the library's rebirth. Cards showed at a glance the number of acts, number of sets, and number of male and female parts. Plays could also be found catalogued under nationality and subject. The next project would be to add a classified clipping file to the library facilities--when volunteers could be found to do the work.

The cost to users was moderate, considering the uniqueness

of the service. Anyone, whether a member or not, could consult library materials. Theatre Club members could borrow books or request information gratis. Individual membership in the library cost \$2 annually while Group membership was \$5. Opening hours were 2--4.30 on Mondays and Wednesdays; Tuesdays 11.30--2.00.  
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The public service provided by the Community Players Theatre Library outlived the MRT itself. After MRT vacated the Crosse St. Playhouse in March 1961, the library, by that time housing around 5,000 books, together with magazines, pamphlets and programs, was donated to the National Theatre School.  
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The timing could not have been better for the School which had opened its doors to students as recently as November 1960.

There has been an interesting continuity in management of the library from the time of its 1939 revival. Marie Stehle was in charge at the start, and guided the growth of the collection till the 1952 fire disaster. After this loss she resolutely set about rebuilding the facility. Her successor, Beatrice Munro Brown, took over a year later and continued as an unpaid volunteer for the rest of her active life, eventually working alongside Mrs de Vreeze, the National Theatre School's salaried librarian.  
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At the time of this writing Mrs de Vreeze is still in place. The tradition of service to the community continues with group membership available for an annual ten dollar fee. The National Theatre School Library is now housed in relatively spacious quarters in the Rue St Denis buildings of the School. Within these

walls something of the Community Players founded in 1920,  
and of the Montreal Repertory Theatre founded in 1929,  
still lives on.

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## Chapter Ten

### MRT--The Achievements and the Undoing

Montreal received at the hands of MRT thirty-one years of high-quality theatrical fare. Founded by a rich woman, the company proved to be much more than her personal toy by flourishing longer after her death than it had done while she lived. Such was the spirit and resourcefulness of the company that when--a decade after Martha Allan's death--they were literally faced with the ashes of their theatre, members were able to continue the season virtually without interruption. In Montreal, while MRT's work was emulated by dozens of theatres --some newly-founded, some of long-standing--none was able to challenge the primacy of what MRT had built. There was no secret to MRT's success. Those intangibles--dedication, hard work and painstakingly acquired skills--were the company's most valuable assets. MRT's record of major productions and experimental works stands as an honourable and unquestionable achievement in this country.

A deliberate generosity of outlook characterizes the activities of MRT right from the time of the founding meeting, and helps us to understand their success. One could be a member of MRT and of any other theatre group without incurring the charge of conflicting loyalties. Thus the amateur actor, Basil Donn, who ran Trinity Players for years, has a record of regular MRT appearances running from the opening performance in 1930 to September 1958. The professional actress, Eleanor Stuart, worked on many occasions with MRT between 1933 and

1960--that is through pre-professional and fully-professional times. Charles Rittenhouse, who had a career in education independent of theatre work, found time to contribute to many Montreal theatrical developments while directing, acting and for a time governing at MRT between 1933 and 1961.

The experimental work of MRT was a valuable part of its educational mission. Naturally members profited from taking part in such activities, but so did the larger community. The availability of work by Brecht, Ionesco and other new writers --not likely on the face of it to promise instant box-office success--provided useful long-term audience training. MRT's inclusion in the 'fifties of items from the French repertoire --Molière, Giraudoux and Anouilh--sparked in their audience a lively curiosity about the activities of French theatre companies which were starting to grow in confidence at that time.

In a more formal way the School of the Theatre provided practical training in all branches of theatre arts for most of the years of MRT's existence. Thousands of Montreal students were affected by the work at a time when no other theatre training was available.

For most students the experience meant they became more enlightened members of an arts-supporting society. Yet a number of those who took an interest in the work of the company went on to do original work of their own. The scale of MRT spin-offs is impressive, counting as it does the Children's Theatre, still in existence nearly sixty years later. Next in time came the Brae Manor Summer Theatre whose

twenty years of operations in Quebec's Eastern Townships showcased Canada's finest talent. Arthur Voronka's North Hatley theatre continued the Sadler tradition in the Townships. This work of Filmore Sadler started in the 'thirties and was picked up later by the Lennoxville Festival and followed in turn by the still-flourishing annual summer programme at North Hatley's Piggery Theatre.

Another experiment was the Lakeshore Summer Theatre which attempted summer stock for two years in Lachine--one of Montreal's satellite cities. Rittenhouse and Whittaker were respectively Supervising Director and Designer for this project. Experience gained there was useful when MRT's Rosanna Seaborn started her Open Air Theatre on Mount Royal in the heart of Montreal. Here she created mammoth Shakespearean productions with casts running over the hundred mark. The Shakespeare Society itself numbered Rittenhouse among its directors and had Whittaker as designer. Their production of Romeo and Juliet in 1947 saw Leo Ciceri as Benvolio and Christopher Plummer as Paris.

Joy Thomson's Canadian Art Theatre (founded 1944) drew heavily on MRT talent for its members. The philosophy was similar to that of the senior group though the company lasted only a short while. Thomson tried again in the 'fifties to run a summer professional group and had a number of successful seasons with her Tent Theatre in the Laurentian resort area north of Montreal. Perhaps the most durable of the theatres with a strong MRT strain in their lineage was the Mountain

Playhouse which passed from Thomson to Norma Springford after its opening seasons.

The work of MRT was not all in English and their importance does not arise exclusively from their Anglophone activity. For a number of years in the 'thirties, when French theatre did not exist in Montreal, the MRT provided the only outlet for French talent. Mario Duliani, in delivering a tribute to Martha Allan at the time of her death, listed some of the French-speaking professionals who had their start with her. "Yvette Brind'Amour, later head of Le Théâtre du Rideau Vert; Jeannine Sutto and Nini Durand of Pierre Dagenais' l'Equipe; Judith Jasmine, Françoise Bertrand and Giselle Schmidt, all popular favourites later, and the extraordinary Gratien Gélinas." <sup>300</sup> As well as players, directors such as Dagenais himself and Guy Beaulne found the opportunity to work in the sister culture with MRT.

The company from its founding adopted a policy of supporting other groups with personnel and services. Montreal's many church basement groups gladly made use of these services, as did special groups such as those run by the Black community and the schools. The MRT could say proudly that as a consequence of its help the quality of productions throughout the city was higher than most companies could have achieved by their own efforts.

The company performed a service similar to that of the British Drama League in developing a library for reference and lending use. Obviously this facility was of immediate practical use for the MRT company while also serving in an

immeasurable way to hearten theatre lovers living in remote communities. Knowledge of the existence of a specialised reference service meant that more ambitious productions could be tackled than if the group knew that it was entirely dependent on its own resources. The existence of sets of scripts for borrowing meant that a play could be read comfortably to check its suitability for a particular company and its audience.

The nurture of Canadian writers was an important part of MRT's educational program. In the 'thirties the School of Playwriting flourished. Mada Gage Bolton, John Hoare, Janet McPhee, Joseph Schull, Wilfred Werry and Herbert Whittaker in English, and Arthur Prévost and Ernest Pallascio-Morin in French, had the experience of hearing their words delivered by actors in MRT productions. The importance of this kind of encouragement can be seen in its effect on Robertson Davies, who in 1948 made a point of being present on two of the three nights when MRT presented a program of his short plays.

All the theatre arts were encouraged by the company. Designers such as Hans Berends, Arthur Voronka and Herbert Whittaker gained much experience at MRT and gave back as much as they took. Whittaker, with his scholarly knowledge, was able to bring the theories of Poel and William Archer to Montreal and to incorporate Craig's theories into his own design practice.

Critics like Myron Galloway of the Montreal Star, and Herbert Whittaker of the Montreal Gazette and Toronto's Globe and Mail spent years practising the sweaty art of play-making

as they wrote stage dialogue and wrestled with directing and design problems in MRT's rehearsal rooms.

The MRT can take credit for success on a national scale. Generations of actors learned their trade with the company-- to such good effect that when in 1952 Tyrone Guthrie was looking for Canadian talent to build the first Stratford company around Alec Guinness he came to MRT and found five of the eighteen actors and actresses he needed. Over the first thirty years of Stratford at least twenty full members of the company served some apprenticeship with MRT. The roll call impresses, including as it does the names of Leo Ciceri, John Colicos, Hume Cronyn, Eric Donkin, Pat Galloway, Gratien Gélinas, Amelia Hall, Joy Lafleur, Christopher Plummer, William Shatner and Eleanor Stuart. It can only be concluded that the Montreal Repertory Theatre has been one of Canada's most successful theatrical academies.

Two MRT names stand out for their importance as educators in the area of theatre. Charles Rittenhouse, as a key employee of the Montreal Protestant (English) School Board, had a powerful influence on building a curriculum in which theatre played a significant part. Furthermore in the selection of teaching personnel and in the installation of high-quality stage fitments in school buildings, his decisions still affect young people a generation after his death. <sup>301</sup>

Rittenhouse's colleague, Norma Springford, made a significant part of her career at the university level. With her work for the Dominion Drama Festival and its local successor, the Quebec Drama Festival, she helped raise

standards of theatrical production. Working as a professional adjudicator her influence was felt through the whole country. Also on the professional front she was for many years responsible for running Montreal's popular summer theatre --the Mountain Playhouse.

To the question whether these members, and others to be mentioned later, made MRT or whether MRT made them, one must answer that MRT served a vital need. The company did provide a meeting place in which many talents could co-exist. The efforts of individuals exercised in this collaborative endeavour did allow results of higher quality to be achieved than any single person could have reached in isolation.

As with individuals so with societies. MRT supported the DDF and participated with enthusiasm. In the early days the company won many prizes and lent skilled personnel to help run the Festival. In so doing MRT made an important contribution to raising theatrical standards in Canada, both in Montreal and in other areas which did not have the resources available in major cities.

In its own city of Montreal MRT helped shape a number of individuals who were to achieve national prominence. John Pratt (businessman, mayor, and federal M.P. in addition to his theatre credits seen earlier) was Commissioner for Entertainment at Expo '67 for which he had a never-to-be-<sup>302</sup>repeated budget of forty-five million dollars. Don McSween, sometime Director of the National Arts Centre, is seen fleetingly in cast lists. Victor Goldbloom found his experience with theatrical temperament stood him in good stead

in 1976 when, as Quebec's Minister in charge of the Olympics, he was responsible for a Montreal opening that was watched by an audience of global dimensions. Brian Macdonald wrote articles on dance for CUE, and on his way to an international career choreographed in 1959 MRT's only original musical. A final name to consider is that of Gratien Gélinas. If MRT had not existed at a time when Gélinas was looking for a leisure hour's amusement he might well have gone to practise his golf instead--and there might have been no Fridolin, no Tit-Coq, no Bousille, and no Comédie Canadienne. MRT did exist, made him welcome, and showed him how. That alone is enough to ensure the company a place of honour in Canada's theatre history.

The MRT stopped producing when it was robbed for the second time of its theatre building. Montreal, which had seen the company triumph over the vicissitudes of thirty years expected them back in business at any moment. Yet the best efforts of many experienced old hands over five years could not bring the curtain to rise again. The explanation of this failure lies not in the superficial problem of assembling barrels and planks for the next performance, but in larger forces of change over which MRT could have no control. They had survived a decade of the Depression; they had flourished through the deprivations of wartime, but they were to be defeated by insidious changes wrought by the peace which followed. The irony is that they were in part responsible themselves for setting some of these changes in motion.

The founder of MRT instilled in the company her belief that only the highest standards of production were acceptable. Professional standards were regularly maintained so it was not unusual for Montreal critics to make comparisons between professional touring productions and MRT's work in which the latter regularly showed to advantage. On the other hand when MRT failed to live up to its own standards it was severely taken to task by the same critics. In the 'fifties upholding professional standards exacted its price. When this decade saw the emergence of real professional theatre in Canada, amateurs of the top class moved easily into a professional career. "The effect of Stratford," Whittaker tells us, "was tremendous. The actors who played at Stratford became overnight the aristocracy of their profession."<sup>303</sup> The effect on amateur theatre in Montreal, as John Pratt tells it, was disastrous. When the best amateurs turned pro only second-rate actors were left. Unlike those who had departed they were unable to draw an audience.<sup>304</sup> The life went out of amateur theatre as the audience stayed away.

Of course it was no new thing for actors to go where the jobs were. MRT was accustomed to seeing young people gain experience on their boards and move on to careers elsewhere. The company's change to professionalism was in part to staunch this outflow, and in part to position themselves where they could entice home-grown stars back from stages elsewhere in Canada and abroad. Yet while MRT was maintaining its traditional series of major productions many of the company's other functions were slipping away. The educational purpose--

once MRT's exclusive domain in Montreal--was being shared with the universities, with the Conservatoire (1955) and in 1960 with the National Theatre School. MRT, in its role of providing practical help to other theatre companies, was displaced by institutions with money to disburse: the Greater Montreal Arts Council in 1956, the Canada Council from 1957, and the Quebec Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1961. MRT, which in its time had given generously, was itself a suppliant to these providers. The poignancy of these declining years is epitomised by the relationship with the Canada Council. In the Council's second year MRT received \$6,000 for "Assistance to Artists and a Resident Director." <sup>305</sup> The following year they were granted \$10,000 "To Continue Operations for the 1959-60 Season." <sup>306</sup> In what turned out to be their last season no grant was forthcoming. Who knows if a moderate sum might not have made all the difference? Charles Rittenhouse believed that two more years of professional work would have brought them back to their old glory. <sup>307</sup>

The library work of MRT was another function nearing its end. Before the loss of Crosse Street an agreement in principle had been made with the National Theatre School whereby the Community Players Theatre Library would find space in the school's building. <sup>308</sup> While remaining accessible to MRT the library would henceforth be under control of the school.

Underlying these changes was a sense of the loss of mission. The MRT as an organisation was starting to move in parallel with the declining DDF and was similarly hampered by

its own history. That an individual, unlike an institution, could more readily adapt to changing times, can be seen in the career of MRT founder, Rupert Caplan. While never abandoning live theatre in which he started, he had moved to a position as Senior CBC producer in radio, and later in television. He was able to ride the changes while MRT found itself dying a lingering death.

The changes in the condition of Canadian theatre were but a tiny part of the world-wide revolution in entertainment brought about by movies and television. The popular actor, Rock Hudson, had become a star without paying his dues in the traditional way.<sup>309</sup> Despite an absence of experience in live theatre he had become an accomplished movie actor known to millions. Work before a live audience--previously believed an essential part of the actor's training--could henceforth be disregarded. MRT was irrelevant to this new career route.

A further onslaught on live theatre was being conducted by the television companies. A period of phenomenal growth<sup>310</sup> followed the start of Canadian television. By the late 'fifties cable companies had started to spread their tentacles in several areas of Montreal thereby encouraging the growing habit of home entertainment. The same phenomenon swept over all North America wiping out many theatres which had survived the war years. In New York alone between 1935 and 1949 the number of theatres had declined from 90 to a third of that number.<sup>311</sup> Montreal was not alone in feeling chill winds.

Once the metropolis of Canada, this proud city had long ago surrendered that title to Toronto. The concentration of family wealth, which had made Montreal's "Square Mile" the richest acreage in the country, was dissipated in the aftermath of the First World War. Too many young men--heirs to the family business--had failed to return from Flanders. Their surviving sisters were not in a position to add to the family fortunes. Taxation became ruinous; within a generation  
312  
Montreal's power was gone.

The MRT had grown out of the Allan fortune, out of the same sense of public duty which had built the Montreal General Hospital and McGill University using private funds. The finances of MRT were not reckoned by normal commercial accounting. As late as the 'fifties the habit of commanding service was still in existence. When a production required a tea-set, the apprentice ASM sent down to Birks, the jewellers, to collect the cups and saucers, would return with genuine Spode. No insurance was taken out on the expensive china. No  
313  
money changed hands for the loan. The principle of noblesse oblige ensured that no one would be out of pocket in case of damage. No record exists of the countless similar accommodations between friends which helped MRT along the way.

While the Montreal of the anglophone ruling class was passing away other significant changes were affecting the rest of society. A post-war flood of immigrants from Europe made homes in the city, replacing the many English-speakers who were moving to Toronto and the West. The school population swelled in Montreal but not with students whose families,

coming as they did from poor countries such as Italy, Greece and Portugal, would look to MRT's English theatre productions for entertainment.

In parallel with these demographic changes affecting anglophones were developments affecting the city's francophones. Freed to a degree from English commercial dominance, the population had begun to enjoy a more self-conscious awareness of Montreal as a French city, particularly as the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde and the Théâtre du Rideau Vert were growing in strength. While French culture took pride in the growing popularity of Quebecois writers, English Canadians had little with which to compete. Even in their own language there was no native growth to compare with what Osborne and Pinter, or Williams and Miller, were doing in the world's centres of English theatre. The title of Patricia Joudry's play, Teach Me How To Cry, had a pathetic topicality in the circumstances.

The MRT would probably have continued in some form beyond 1961 if it had owned a building of sufficient size to be self-supporting solely from ticket sales. But the sponsor who might have made this possible never materialized. The company came close in 1939 to exploiting Westmount's offer of land. Cecil West designed a theatre, as did John Pratt at a later stage, but the money for bricks was never found. In the end the will to survive was not strong enough. Assets had to be sold to pay debts. <sup>314</sup> Members had no focus for their chosen activity, and no one could develop enough drive to start the company up again. <sup>315</sup>

MRT was not alone in feeling its age. Trinity Players, with a history of fifty-two years, also folded in 1961. The decade which would see the Union Jack dropped in favour of a Maple Leaf flag, which would see 120 nations and 50 million admissions to Montreal's Expo '67, and which would see the Beatles make their fortunes faster and louder than any musicians in history, was perhaps a little too effervescent for the venerable institution which MRT had become.

\* \* \*



C O N T E N T S		F O R		M A R C H		1 9 4 5	
The Big Town				Membership List			
by Robert Somerville		3		Associate Group			10
Stage Whispers				Musically Speaking			
by Gordon Jones		4-5		by Thomas Archer			13-14
There Shall Be No Night				Book Review			
Preview of Fifth Major		6		by Tony Dawn			15
Changes in Lin Hats				London Nostalgia			
By G. O. Merrill		8-9		by Oldimer			16



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 Drama editor of Le Droit and Director of Drama at the  
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 216 Letter to MRT members, 29 May 1953.

217 Voronka would later open his own theatre in a curling rink at North Hatley in the Eastern Townships to capitalize on the audience attracted to Brae Manor productions.

218 "The reading was done pleasantly and intelligently in the fine setting of the YMCA's auditorium....There were around 300 present, which shows that the MRT has succeeded in attracting a select audience for the essential art of drama--one which is prepared to give serious attention to the work itself and does not need settings, costumes or fancy lighting effects."

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After a B.A. and teacher training in New Brunswick, Springford worked extensively in the province in school and community theatre before coming to Montreal in 1941, where she joined MRT and other companies. She was a professional adjudicator, and winner of the Martha Allan trophy for directing in the Quebec Regional Drama Festival. She became Chairman of the latter, and Governor and Executive member of the DDF. After joining the faculty of Sir George Williams College (now Concordia University) in Montreal, she directed the

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"...in order to find subjects for their work in the world around them."

Jean Béraud, 350 Ans de Théâtre Au Canada-Français.

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Béraud 208.

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"His parents and teachers, far from joyfully acclaiming this God-given gift...would do everything in their power to frustrate the will of Providence. They might solemnly forbid

the child to have anything to do with theatre, or they might force him to take unsuitable parts so that he would develop an immediate and permanent revulsion against our great tragedies and classical comedies." Béraud, 230-231. (Jacques Leduc quoted.)

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Béraud 231.

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"In 1937 the situation was truly desperate.... No genuinely professional theatre. Appalling working conditions for the actor condemned to the broadcasting studios, where he is usually reliant on his natural skills alone, without the benefit of training in a conservatory or theatre school."

Jean Hamelin, Le Renouveau du Théâtre au Canada-Français (Montreal: Editions du Jour, 1962) 155.

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Hamelin, The Theater 9.

278

"...pure theatre--without qualification--whether religious or secular. There were conditions, however. This theatre had to be wholesome and poetical, and the spirit and style had to be put across as harmonious elements. In the end he felt that the cultural development which he perceived in French-Canadian society was sufficiently advanced to justify and make acceptable his production of Lucrèce. 'Our Canadian theatre still remains to be built,' he declared. 'In its name we lay claim to a genuine humanism, full of health, and sufficiently accessible that it will not turn away those who were repelled in the past by an excess of petty restrictions.'"

Emile Légault qtd. in Hamelin, Le Renouveau 29.

279 Hamelin, Renouveau 158.

280 Ferdinand Biondi, Personal papers. Copy in possession  
of Philip Booth.

281 "Here we must face up to our many and practically  
insurmountable problems. Here are some of them :

1) The lack of atmosphere. Let me explain. We are in a world  
of English speakers. They are all keenly interested in the  
French movement. Unfortunately they do not all operate on the  
same wavelength as the French--that is not something which  
develops overnight. They don't have our zest: that is  
something you have to be born with.

2) Lack of funds: we....have to put on our presentations as  
inexpensively as possible. I don't have to tell you how hard  
this is. The French Section is being lumped in with the rest  
and we have to make do with what we're given.

3) The chief cause of our unhappiness is that we have no way  
of paying the actors."

Biondi papers.

282 "The MRT will always be happy to listen to proposals from  
those wishing to take up their cause. Canadian writers will  
always be welcomed with open arms. They will always treat  
artists warmly. All we can give in return is our friendship  
and experience."

Biondi papers.

283 "I challenge any of Montreal's theatrical organizations  
to bring forward a report as 'Canadian' as ours."

Biondi papers.

284 Gratien Gélinas, telephone interview, 20 Jan. 1988.

285 Ferdinand Biondi, personal interview, 11 Feb. 1988.

286 (Unsigned) "MRT Ends Its Season," Gazette

19 June 1937: 10.

287 Renée Legris, Jean-Marc Larrue, André-g. Bourassa and  
Gilbert David, Le Théâtre Au Québec 1825-1980 (Montreal: VLB  
Editeur, 1988) 95.

#### Chapter 9:

288 Whittaker 285.

289 (Unsigned) "Unique Dramatic Library, Theatre Museum  
Destroyed," Gazette 6 March 1952: 9.

290 "Unique Dramatic Library," Gazette

291 Saturday Night, 22 March 1953. MRT papers in NTS.

292 CUE April 1948. Rosanna Seaborn papers.

293 (Unsigned) "Unique Dramatic Library, Theatre Museum

Destroyed," Gazette 6 March 1952: 9.

294 CUE Sept. 1953. Sally Starke papers.

295 (Unsigned) "New MRT Library Now In Operation,"

Gazette 2 Nov. 1957: 33.

296 Montreal Star 5 March 1952. MRT papers in NTS.

297 CUE Sept. 1953. Sally Starke papers.

298 (Unsigned) "Theatre library Joining School," Gazette

4 March 1961: 20.

299 Munro Brown, (former editor of CUE), telephone  
interview, 20 Dec. 1987.

#### Chapter 10:

300 Whittaker 263.

301 Patrick G. Neilson, "Charles Burket Rittenhouse: Theatrical Avocations and Affiliations 1925-1976." Theatre History In Canada. 4, 1 (1983): 73-92.

302 John Pratt, personal interview, 30 July, 1988.

303 H.W. Whittaker, "The Theatre," The Culture Of Contemporary Canada, ed. Julian Park, (Toronto: Ryerson; Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1957) 176.

304 John Pratt, personal interview, 30 July, 1988.

305 Canada Council Annual Report 1958-59.: June 1959: 92.

306 Canada Council Annual Report 1959-60.: June 1960: 82.

In 1960 the Rideau Vert was awarded \$6,500, while Théâtre du Nouveau Monde received \$15,000. The following year, when MRT was given no grant, Rideau Vert obtained \$10,000, TNM \$20,000, and La Poudrière a start-up grant of \$7,500.

307 Rittenhouse, audio-taped interview. See Note 99.

308 (Unsigned) "Theatre Library Joining School," Gazette

4 March 1961: 20.

309 Harold Whitehead, "Rock Hudson Reverses Trend: He Started Acting In Movies," Gazette 5 March 1960: 23.

310 S.M. Crean, Who's Afraid Of Canadian Culture?

(Don Mills, Toronto: General Publishing, 1976) 39.

"When (Canadian) television opened up in Sept. 1952 with two stations, there were already 146,000 sets in Canada, which had been picking up US channels along the border. By 1957 there were 42 television stations in Canada and 2,750,000 sets."

311 T.Archer, "MRT Anniversary," Gazette 26 Nov. 1949: 22.

- 312 Susan Schwartz, "Decline of Anglo Power Began  
Decades Ago," Gazette 14 Dec. 1987, Section B 11.
- 313 Eugene Jousse, personal interview, 24 Jan. 1988.
- 314 (Unsigned) "Three Obituaries", The Monitor (Montreal)  
14 Dec. 1961: 15. Copy in MRT papers at NTS.
- 315 Griffith Brewer, telephone interview, 11 Jan. 1988.

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## M O N T R E A L   R E P E R T O R Y   T H E A T R E

1 9 3 0 - 1 9 6 1

Handlist of Major ProductionsNOTENumbering of Productions

MRT did not always carefully distinguish between Major Productions and other productions. In the early days some Studio works, e.g. Lady Precious Stream (Chinese comedy), are definitely novelties in the repertoire, and are described in the program as both Studio Productions and Major Productions. Sometimes a Major Production bears a number on the program cover and sometimes it does not. Major Production No. 137--Anna Christie in May 1953--is the last production to be given a number by the company.

Henry IV in Feb./March 1961--the last MRT production--would probably be No. 187 if numbering had continued.

THEATRE GUILD OF MONTREALOpening Season 1929 - 19301) The Perfect Alibi - A.A.Milne

26 March 1929 : 5 perfs.

Moyse Hall, McGill University. Dir. Martha Allan with R.Caplan  
 SUSAN CUNNINGHAM = Martha Allan JIMMY LUDGROVE = Maurice Wells

The Company

Martha Allan; J.W. Austin; Ruxton Byatt; Alfred Dann; Basil  
 Donn; Frederick Forrest; Hal Grindon; Doris Hedges; Geoffrey  
 Hedges; Maurice Wells; Sybil West.

\* \* \*

MONTREAL REPERTORY THEATREFirst Season : 1930 - 19312) Candida - G.B.Shaw

29 Oct. 1930 : 4 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. Martha Allan with Rupert Caplan

Setting - Cecil West

CANDIDA = Martha Allan REV JAMES MORRELL = R.M.Stewart

3) The Constant Wife - W.S. Maugham

18 Dec. 1930 : 4 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. M.Allan with Rupert Caplan

Setting - Cecil West

CONSTANCE MIDDLETON = M. Allan JOHN MIDDLETON = R.M.Stewart

4) R.U.R. - Karel Capek

7 Jan. 1931 : 4 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. Rupert Caplan. Setting - Cecil West

HELENA GLORY = Helen Trenholme HARRY DOMIN = Sydney Pierce

5) La Souriante Madame Beudet - Denys Amiel/Andre Obey

26 Feb. 1931 : 2 perfs.

Victoria Hall, Westmount. Dir. Martha Allan

MME BEAUDET = M. Allan M. BEAUDET = Prof. René du Roure

NOTE : First production in French

6) The Roof - John Galsworthy

25 March 1931 : 4 perfs.

Dir. M.Allan with Rupert Caplan. Set - Cecil West

MRS BEETON = Mrs Basil Donn GUSTAVE = Charles H. Hillman

Special Production : members only

Good Theatre - Sir Andrew MacPhail

On Passe Donc Huit Jours - Sacha Guitry

Moyse Hall. 20 May 1931

The Company

Somer Alberg; Martha Allan; Rupert Caplan; Miss Colby;  
 Ellison Cooper; Alfred Dann; Constance Dawes; Mrs Basil Donn;  
 Prof. René du Roure; Lord Duncannon; Hal Grindon; Cedric  
 Hands; Lester J. Heald; G.P.Hedges; Gillian Hessey-White;  
 Charles Hillman; J.P.D.Innes; Jeannine Lavallée; E.F. Lloyd;  
 Lawrence MacMahon; Vera D. Macfarland; Desmond Massey-  
 Beresford; F. Millington; Leonard Paul; Marguerite Porteous;  
 Adjutor Savard; R.M.Stewart; Marguerite Strathy; Simone  
 Taylor; Helen Trenholme; Jean Wallis; Edwyn Wayte.

\* \* \*

Second Season : 1931 - 19327) The Mask and The Face : Luigi Chiarelli

4 Nov. 1931 : 3 perfs.

Moyses Hall. Dir. Martha Allan with Rupert Caplan.

Setting - Cecil West

DELIA = Gertrude Wallis ALMAIRE = Cedric Hands

## 8) Joint production with Ottawa Little Theatre

The Truth About Blayds : A.A.Milne. Ottawa L.Th.The Cat and The Cherub : C.B Fernald. MRT

Ottawa production of both plays - 16-19 Dec. 1931

Montreal production of both plays - 21-22 Dec. 1931

For MRT prod.- Dir. M.Allan. Set-Lord Bessborough (Governor-  
General)

LUM YAH = Rosanna Todd CHIN FANG = Lord Duncannon

9) The Adding Machine - Elmer Rice

6 Jan. 1932 : 4 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. M. Allan with Rupert Caplan.

Setting - Richard Eve

MRS ZERO = Dorothy Davis MR ZERO = Larry McMahon

MR THREE = Hume Cronyn

10) The Man in Possession - H.M.Harwood

30 March 1932 : 5 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. M.Allan. Setting - Richard Eve.

THE WIDOW = Martha Allan THE BAILIFF = Dennis Field

Workshop Production ( One-act plays)

Moyse Hall : Cecil West ; Chairman of MRT Workshop

17 May 1932 L'Affaire - R.H.Mainer (in English)

L'Erreur - Henri Letondal (in French)

The First Folio - S. Morgan - Powell

18 May 1932 Whirr of Wings - Mary Wallace Brooks

Ingratitude - Sir Andrew MacPhail

Le Retour du Marquis - Tristan Bernard (in Fr.)

The Company

Somer Alberg; Martha Allan; Ferdinand Biondi; Barbara Cowan;  
Percy Cowans Jr.; Hume Cronyn; Alfred Dann; Dorothy Davis;  
Stockwell Day; Walter Downs; Lord Duncannon; R.S.Eve; Dennis  
Field; Diane Gordon; Stevenson Gossage; Frederick Graham;  
Cedric Hands; Lester Heald; Cyril Hessey-White; Charles H.  
Hill; Edward Hope; Phyllis Lyth; Larry MacMahon; Will Marr;  
Leonard Paul; Sylvie Prower; Barbara Ramsay; Filmore Sadler;  
Hazen Size; Rosanna (Todd) Seaborn; Helen Trenholme; Gertrude  
Wallis; Wilfred Werry.

\* \* \*

Third Season : 1932 - 1933

11) Twelve Thousand - Bruno Frank

12 Oct. 1932 : 4 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. Martha Allan with Rupert Caplan.

Setting - Richard Eve

THE BARONESS = Helen Trenholme    THE PRINCE = Basil Dignam

12) Joint Production with Ottawa Drama League : players from  
Ottawa, Toronto and Winnipeg.

Hamlet - W.Shakespeare

Ottawa production - 26-27 Dec. 1932.

Montreal production - 29-31 Dec. 1932

Moyse Hall. Dir. Martha Allan with Rupert Caplan

Set design - Lord Bessborough

GERTRUDE = Helen Trenholme    HAMLET = Lord Duncannon

13) Joint production with Les Anciens de Gésu.

Noe - André Obey (in French)

Salle Academique, College Ste. Marie. (Home of Les Anciens)

21 March 1933 : 3 perfs.

Dir. M.Allan assisted by Pacifique Plante

MADAME NOE = Yvette Gouin    NOE = Dr Honore David

14) Twelfth Night - W.Shakespeare

20 April 1933 : 3 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. and Sets - Edwyn Wayte

OLIVIA = Leslie Crombie    ORSINO = George Mountford

15) Dulcy - G.Kaufman / M.Connelly

15 May 1933 : 3 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. Martha Allan with Donald Wetmore

DULCINEA SMITH = Martha Allan    GORDON SMITH = Charles Yuile

#### Studio Productions

The Miraculous History of St. Bernard - Henri Ghéon

December 1932. Dir. Cecil West.

Three one-act Plays in French :

La Grande Demande - Robert Choquette

Matines et Laudes - Léopold Houlé

Tu Changeras - Michel Seymour

New Plateau School. Lafontaine Park. 16 Jan. 1933.

Periphery - .....

Feb. 1933 : 1 perf. Dir. Louis Mulligan.

Twelfth Night - W. Shakespeare

MRT Studio. 1461 Union St. 7 March 1933 : 3 perfs.

Presented to the public later as Major Production No. 14

The Company

Somer Alberg; George Alexander; Martha Allan; Maud Aston;  
Whitfield Aston; Ferdinand Biondi; Newton Boronow; Rupert  
Caplan; Leslie Crombie; Mrs Leslie Crombie; Randolph Crowe;  
Alfred Dann; Yvette De Lorier; Beth Dennistoun; Basil Dignam;  
Henry Donald; Lord Duncannon; Richard Eve; Guy Fillon-Payoux;  
Laurette Fournier; Burt Hall; Cyril Hessey-White; Peter  
Hilton; Peggy Locke; Reta MacDonald; Lawrence MacMahon; James  
Mellor; Yvette O. Mercier-Gouin; Carl Miskin; A. Morrison-  
Baird; George Mountford; Louis Mulligan; Thomas Noon; Charles  
Rittenhouse; Malcolm Scott; Olivette Thibault; Helen  
Trenholme; Robert Watt; Cecil West; Charles Yuile.

\* \* \*

Fourth Season : 1933 - 1934

16) Hedda Gabler - Henrik Ibsen

18 Oct. 1933 : 4 perfs.

Moyses Hall. Dir. M. Allan with Cecil West.

Setting - Anthony Guadagni

HEDDA GABLER = Martha Allan      GEORGE TESMAN = Filmore Sadler

17) Dangerous Corner - J.B. Priestley

23 Nov. 1933 : 4 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M.Allan with Cecil West.

Setting - Anthony Guadagni

FREDA CHATFIELD = Martha Allan ROBERT CHATFIELD = Alan Marshall

18) Joint Production with Ottawa Drama League : players from  
Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, Montreal.

Romeo and Juliet - W. Shakespeare

29 Dec. 1933 : 3 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. Rupert Harvey. Set Design - Lord Bessborough

JULIET = Julia McBain ROMEO = Lord Duncannon

19) Lilies of the Field - J.H. Turner

17 Jan. 1934 : 4 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. M. Allan with Cecil West. Set - A.Guadagni

MRS ROOKE-WALKER = Martha Allan REV JOHN HEAD = Alex Frazer

20) The Inspector General - N.Gogol

22 Feb. 1934 : 3 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Set by Shebayeff

THE MAYOR'S WIFE = Maud Aston KHLESTAKOV = Cecil West

21) The Mad Hopes - Romney Brent

1 May 1934 : 3 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. Martha Allan with Cecil West

Setting - Bourne Pearce

MRS CLYTEMNESTRA HOPE = Martha Allan

MR KLEIN = Filmore Sadler

22) The Drunkard - C.H. Smith

4 June 1934 : 6 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton Hotel (Garden)

Dir. Edwyn Wayte with M.Allan and C. West.

Studio Productions : Union Ave. Studio

9 Nov. 1933. Private Prod. Plays by Montreal Theatre Critics

Three Characters in Search of a Plot - T. Archer

Un Cocktail de Trop - Leon Edel

Critics on the Hearth - David Legate

Triple Bill. Nov. 1933 : 1 perf.

Between Two Worlds - Dir.C.Rittenhouse (author)

The God Box Ghost - Richard Eve

(Third play unknown)

Double Bill. 30 Jan. 1934 : 3 perfs.

The Lost Symphony

The Hairy Ape (extracts) - E. O'Neill

Dominion Drama Festival entries : April 1934

Les Deux Couverts - Sacha Guitry

All On a Summer's Day - Martha Allan

Major French Production. 12 June 1934 : 3 perfs.

Le Cheval de Course - Henri Letondal

Gratien Gélinas = leading role

The Company

Mme. Alarie; Martha Allan; Maud Aston; Whitfield Aston; Chella Barott; Ferdinand Biondi; William Brodie; Emmett Burke; Leslie Chance; Eileen Clifford; Reginald Cornish; Percy Cowan; Barbara Cowans; Leslie Crombie; Randolph Crowe; Alfred Dann;

Beryl Dann; Basil Dignam; Lord Duncannon; Jean Ellis; Alex Frazer; Gratien Gélinas; Albert Goodstone; Hal Grindon; Anthony Guadagni; Burt Hall; Hans Jensen; Cyril Hessey-White; Gordon Leclaire; Reta MacDonald; Alan Marshall; Julia McBain; Rob Roy McGregor; Frank McKintosh; Lorna McLean; James Mellor; Mildred Mitchell; Louis Mulligan; Cecil Nichol; Eleanor Nichol (Stuart); Douglas Peterson; Elsie Poole; Jan Raven; Filmore Sadler; Madge Sadler; Horace Sevigny; Orea Sneed; Geraldine Sutherland; Howard Turner; Mollie Usher-Jones; Andre Verrier; Roger Watkins-Pitchford; Robert Watt; Edwyn Wayte; Cecil West.

Fifth Season : 1934 - 1935

NOTE: There is a lack of information for this season. In the absence of programs or other absence of other evidence no attempt has been made to number the Major Productions.

23) The Man With A Load Of Mischief - Ashley Dukes

14 Nov. 1934 : 4 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Dir. M.Allan with Cecil West

Design - Herbert Whittaker

THE LADY = Eleanor Stewart      THE NOBLEMAN = Cyril Hessey-White

27) When Ladies Meet - Rachel Crothers

15 Feb. 1935 : 4 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton. Dir. M.Allan. Setting - Bourne Pearce

MRS BRIDGET DRAKE = Martha Allan      CLAIRE WOODRUFF = Eleanor Stuart

(?) Pierrot, The Prodigal

(Named in list of past productions published in CUE Jan. 1950.)

(?) Tom Sawyer

(Named in CUE Jan. 1950 list)

(?) The Merry Wives Of Windsor - W. Shakespeare

13 May 1935 : 7 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton. Dir. Edwyn Wayte. Sets - Cecil West

MISTRESS QUICKLY = Maud Aston FALSTAFF = Whitfield Aston

(Gratien Gélinas = supporting role)

32) Uncle Tom's Cabin (from H.Beecher Stowe's novel)

20 June 1935 : 3 perfs. plus 2 additional perfs.

Ritz-Carlton. Dir. M.Allan with Cecil West.

Settings by C.West and B.Pearce

(Play followed by "Gay Nineties Grand Concert

with 'Tiller Girls' Chorus")

#### Studio Productions

- Double Bill. Oct. 1934 : 1 perf.

The Dark Lady Of The Sonnets : G.B.Shaw

All On A Summer's Day : Martha Allan

- MRT Studio. 14 Jan. 1935 : 5 perfs.

Back To Methuselah (Parts 1,2,3) : G.B.Shaw

Dir. M.Allan with Rene Almond. Design.C.West

#### The Company

Somer Alberg; Martha Allan; Maud Aston; Whitfield Aston; James Barber; Tom Barnes; Marjorie Brewer; Freda Clark; Reginald Cornish; P.J.Cregan; Alfred Dann; Gratien Gélinas; Reginald Genet; Stevenson Gossage; Cedric Hands; Cyril Hessey-White;

Gwynne Lasher; Gordon LeClaire; Cecil Nichol; Eleanor Nichol (Stuart); Douglas Peterson; J. Emery Phaneuf; Elsie Poole; Una Prower; Jack Ralph; Margaret Rawlings; Charles Rittenhouse; Filmore Sadler; Marjorie Sadler; Lorna Sheard; Gerald Taylor; Mollie Usher-Jones; Walter Wakefield; Edwyn Wayte; Walter Whitaker; Lilian Wilkinson.

NOTE : No cast lists seen for Pierrot, The Prodigal or Tom Sawyer.

Sixth Season : 1935 : 1936

33) The Wind And The Rain - Merton Hodges

3 Oct. 1935 : 3 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Design - H.W. Whittaker; B. Pearce

ANNE HARGREAVES = Margaret Rawlings CHARLES TRITTON = Cecil Nichol

34) (Studio Production) Lady Precious Stream - S.I. Hsiung  
(English version by M. Gest)

14 Nov. 1935 : 11 perfs. Dir. M. Allan with Hilda Gray.

Design - H.W. Whittaker.

LADY PRECIOUS STREAM = Marjorie Brewer

35) Bird In Hand - John Drinkwater

12 Dec. 1935 : 3 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Design - Cecil West

ALICE GREENLEAF = Maud Aston THOMAS GREENLEAF = Whitfield Aston

36) Post Road - W. Steel & N. Mitchell

1 Feb. 1936 : 4 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton. Dir. M. Allan with C. West and F. Sadler

Design - Fetherstonhaugh and Durnford (architects)

EMILY MADISON = Martha Allan REV WESLEY CARTWRIGHT = F. Sadler

37) Waiting For Lefty - Clifford Odets

5 March 1936 : 3 perfs and 6 additional perfs.

MRT Studio. Dir. M.Allan with Cecil West

EDNA = Marjorie Brewer SID = Charles Rittenhouse

NOTE : - Bill included D.D.F. entries by two other clubs in this 'dry-run' for the Regional Finals.

- MRT also entered The Dark Lady Of The Sonnets for the same Finals and came first. DARK LADY = Eleanor Nichol

38) The Bishop Misbehaves - Frederick Jackson

2 April 1936 : 3 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan with F. Sadler. Design. C. West

BISHOP OF BROADMINSTER = Jack Ralph MRS WALKER = Martha Allan

39) Young England - Walter Reynolds

18 June 1936 : 6 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton. Dir. M. Allan with F. Sadler and John Pratt

Design - H.W.Whittaker and Shirley Simpson

(with refreshments and a Variety Show to follow.)

The Company

Somer Alberg; Martha Allan; Maud Aston; Whitfield Aston; Pat Beatts; Murray Black; Marjorie Brewer; Emmett Burke; Ruxton Byatt; Cora Carmichael; George Clarke; Kenneth Cross; Dorothy Danford; Alfred Dann; Beryl Dann; Edwin Eddison; Phyllis Elder; Amy Fairbairn-Smith; Alex Frazer; Sumner Frew; Robert Goodier; Hal Grindon; Ailsa Hands; Cedric White; Cyril Hessey-White; David Hoffman; Marjorie Jackson; Gordon LeClaire; William MacDonald; Reta Macdonald; Tom McBride; Jean

McLintick; Irving Moscovitch; Cecil Nichol; Eleanor Nichol;  
 Thomas Noon; June Parker; Douglas Peterson; Elsie Poole; John  
 Pratt; Michael Prichard; Jack Ralph; Margaret Rawlings;  
 Charles Rittenhouse; Filmore Sadler; Orea Sneed; Esther  
 Solloway; Stella Sprowell; Tim Stapleton; Robin Stoker;  
 Christopher Sutton; Lorraine Tasker; Andre Verrier; Walter  
 Wakefield; Walter Whitaker; John Williams.

Seventh Season : 1936 - 1937

40) Blind Alley - James Warwick

20 Oct. 1936 : 5 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton. Dir. M.Allan. Design - Cecil West.

THE GUNMAN = Charles Rittenhouse MAZIE STONER = Reta Macdonald

41) Hay Fever - Noel Coward

9 Dec. 1936 : 4 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. M. Allan with F. Sadler. Design - C. West

JUDITH BLISS = Martha Allan DAVID BLISS = Filmore Sadler

42) The Chester Mysteries

19 Dec. 1936 : 3 perfs.

Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul

No cast list printed. Anonymous players include Eleanor Nichol  
 and Alfred Dann.

43) Laburnum Grove - J.B. Priestley

20 Jan. 1937 : 4 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Design - Shirley Simpson

ELSIE RADFERN = Stella Sprowell GEORGE RADFERN = Whitfield Aston

44) Libel - Edward Wooll

23 Feb. 1937 : 5 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton. Dir. Cecil West.

SIR MARK LODDON = Burt Hall    LADY LODDON = Eleancr Nichol

45) Petticoat Fever - Mark Reed

31 March 1937 : 4 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. Martha Allan    Designer - Cecil West

ETHEL CAMPION = Margaret Rawlings

DASCOMBE DINSMORE = Cecil Nichol

46) All At Sea (Revue)

26 May 1937 : 8 perfs.

Ritz-Carlton. Dir. Martha Allan; Cecil West; Filmore Sadler;  
John Pratt.

Designers - Herbert Whittaker; Louis Mulligan .

Studio Productions

- Breakfast - Wilfred Werry. 22 Oct. 1936 : 1 perf.

Playwriting Group : 18 Nov.1936 : 1 perf.

- The Lovely Devil - Joseph Schull

- The Land Of Beulah - Mrs. R. Campbell Scott

Playwriting Group : 9 April 1937 : 3 perfs.

- Painted Money - Percy Jacobson

- The Eleventh Hour - Joseph Schull

- The Gallant's Bête Noir - Jean Bonar Actou

Dominion Drama Festival Productions : Quebec Western Region  
4 Feb.1937.

- La Lumière Dans Le Tombeau - René Berton

French Section of MRT

## French Section of MRT

- The Eleventh Hour - Joseph Schull

MRT Studio Group

- Suppressed Desires - Susan Glaspell

Montreal Repertory Theatre

The Company

Martha Allan; Maud Aston; Whitfield Aston; Barbara Ballantyne;  
 Murray Black; Violet Broadhurst; Ruxton Byatt; Winifred Cam;  
 Caro Carmichael; E. Grant Crofton; Kenneth Cross; Dorothy  
 Danford; Alfred Dann; Phyllis Elder; George Erskine-Jones;  
 Robert Goodier; Hal Grindon; Burt Hall; Eric Hall; Cedric  
 Hands; Elizabeth Harcourt; Victor Hepplewhite; Cyril Hessey-  
 White; Joy Lafleur; Fred Landis; Reta Macdonald; Bobbie  
 Molson; Ronnie Morrow; Eleanor Nichol (Stuart); John Pratt;  
 Jack Ralph; Charles Rittenhouse; Filmore Sadler; James Sails;  
 Esther Solloway; Stella Sprowell; Geraldine Sutherland;  
 Olivette Thibault; Walter Wakefield; Edwyn Waite; Betty  
 Wilson; Mary Wright.

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Eighth Season : 1937 - 193847) Fresh Fields - Ivor Novello

19 Oct. 1937 : 8 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Setting - Cecil West

LADY MARY CRABBE = Martha Allan

TOM LARCOMB = Filmore Sadler

48) Judgement Day - Elmer Rice

7 Dec. 1937 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. Martha Allan. Setting - Cecil West

LYDIA KUMAN = Marjorie Brewer    GEORGE KHITOV = Robert Goodier

49) The Distaff Side - John Van Druten

18 Jan. 1938 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Setting - Cecil West

MRS VENABLES = Martha Allan    EVIE MILLWARD = Eleanor Nichol

50) The Amazing Dr Clitterhouse - Barré Lyndon

1 March 1938 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Settings - Cecil West

NURSE ANN = Doreen Lewis    DR CLITTERHOUSE = Burt Hall

51) On Approval - Frederick Lonsdale

5 April 1938 : 5 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Setting - Louis Mulligan

MARIA WISLACK = Roeberta Beatty    DUKE OF BRISTOL = Cecil West

52) Pride And Prejudice - Helen Jerome

17 May 1938 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Designs - Cecil West

ELIZABETH BENNET = Gillian Hessey-White    MR DARCY = John Ready

Special Productions- Un Homme - Yvette O. Mercier-Gouin

His Majesty's Theatre. 27 Nov. 1938 : 10 perfs.

Dir. Henri Letondal.

Jacques Auger : Antoinette Giroux (Leading roles)

- The Chester Mysteries

Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul. 16 Dec. : 3 perfs.

MRT Section Française- Don Juan - Ernest Pallascio-Morin- Maldonne - Arthur Prevost

Sun Life Auditorium. 9 March 1938. 1 perf.

Dir. Mario Duliani

The Company

Martha Allan; Maud Aston; Jacques Auger; Mary Ballantine;  
 Andree Basilienne; Roeberta Beatty; Murray Black; Marjorie  
 Brewer; Violet Broadhurst; Ruxton Byatt; Winifred Cam; Rene  
 Chaput; Louis Crepeau; Alfred Dann; Florence Demers; Pauline  
 Donalda; Muriel Duncan; Brownie Evans; Amy Fairbarn-Smith;  
 Antoinette Giroux; Robert Goodier; Hal Grindon; Ailsa Hands;  
 Cedric Hands; Elizabeth Harcourt; Dorothy Hearn; Cicely  
 Hessey-White; Gillian Hessey-White; Cyril Hessey-White; Joy  
 Lafleur; François Lavigne; Gordon LeClaire; Chester LeMaistre;  
 Doreen Lewis; John Loggie; Fraser MacCorquodale; Althea  
 Maclean; Ross McGregor; Peggy McLean; Philip Neilson; Eleanor  
 Nichol (Stuart); Douglas Peterson; John Ready; Filmore Sadler;  
 Marjorie Sadler; Michael Seymour; Esther Solloway; Montgomery  
 St. Alphonse; Robert Watt; Cecil West; Robert Young.

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Ninth Season : 1938 - 193953) Storm In A Teacup - James Bridie

18 Oct. 1938 : 8 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M.Allan. Design - Cecil West

MRS FLANAGAN = Martha Allan JOSEPH McKELLAR = John Ready

54) Love From A Stranger - Frank Vosper

29 Nov. 1938 : 7 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Design - Cecil West

CECILY HARRINGTON = Marjorie Sadler BRUCE LOVELL = Filmore Sadler

55) The Importance Of Being Earnest - Oscar Wilde

17 Jan. 1939 : 6 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan. Design - Cecil West

GWENDOLYN FAIRFAX = Gillian Hessey-White JOHN WORTHING = Jack Ralph

56) Father Malachy's Miracle - Brian Doherty

28 Feb. 1939 : 5 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. M.Allan with F.Sadler. Settings - L.Mulligan

PEGGY McNAB = Stella Sprowell FR MALACHY = Hal Grindon

57) Aren't We All - Frederick Lonsdale

25 April 1939 : 6 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M.Allan. Setting - Cecil West

LADY FRINTON = Martha Allan LORD GREENHAM = Cyril Hessey-White

58) Private Lives - Noel Coward

30 May 1938 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M.Allan. Settings - Louis Mulligan

AMANDA = Joy Lafleur ELYOT = Cecil West

MRT Studio- The Late Christopher Bean - Sydney Howard

10 Nov.1938 : 1 perf. Dir. Filmore Sadler

- Scenes from John Gabriel Borkman - H.Ibsen

25 Jan. 1939 : 1 perf. Dir. F.&amp; M.Sadler

- Macbeth - W.Shakespeare

Feb. Dir. Cecil West and John Ready

MACBETH = D.Peterson LADY MACBETH = E.Solloway

School of the Theatre

- Uncle Vanya - A.Chekov.Nov.Dir.C.Rittenhouse

- Stage Door - Ferber/Kaufman.May.Dir.F.Sadler

The Company

Martha Allan; Irene Almond; Molly Ballantine; Andrew Bassett-Speirs; Martha Brind'Amour; Marcella Butler; Ruxton Byatt; Harry Candib; Nathan Caplan; Kathleen Capreol; Marguerite Cleary; Leo Considine; John Cox; Kenneth Culley; David Dick; Muriel Duncan; Phyllis Elder; Virginia Fair; Phyllis Fitch; Alex Frazer; Gordon Glass; Robert Goodier; Sam Gorlick; Andrew Grier; Hal Grindon; Ailsa Hands; Dorothy Hervey; Cicely Hessey-White; Cyril Hessey-White; Gillian Hessey-White; Irene Ingham; J.P.D.Innes; Alfred Kinsman; Anne L'Allier; Joy Lafleur; Paul Lieven; John Loggie; David Mathieson; Hilda Mulvany Gray; Lionel Murton; Cecil Nichol; Douglas Peterson; Elsie Poole; Jack Ralph; John Ready; Ruella Robertson; Filmore Sadler; Marjorie Sadler; Fred Sheward; Orea Sneed; Esther Solloway; Stella Spowell; John Vrooland; Robert Watt; Cecil West; Tim Whalen; Edward Wilson; Robert Young.

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Tenth Season : 1939 - 1940

59) George And Margaret - Gerald Savory

17 Oct. 1939 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M.Allan. Setting - Cecil West

MRS GARTH-BANDER = Martha Allan MR GARTH-BANDER = Filmore Sadler

60) Family Portrait - L.Coffey / W.J.Cowen

5 Dec. 1939 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M.Allan. Setting - Cecil West

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS = Betty Wilson JAMES = Charles Rittenhouse

61) The Circle - Somerset Maugham

16 Jan. 1940 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. John Hoare with Martha Allan

ELIZABETH = Joy Lafleur LORD PORTEOUS = Cyril Hessey-White

62) The Unguarded Hour - Bernard Merivale

5 March 1940 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M.Allan with Filmore Sadler

LADY DEARDEN = Gillian Hessey-White

SIR FRANCIS DEARDEN = Cedric Hands

63) The Gentle People - Irwin Shaw

16 April 1940 : 5 perfs.

Vict.Hall.Dir. M.Allan with Filmore Sadler. Setting - C.West

JONAH GOODMAN = Hal Grindon PHILIP ANAGNOS = Robert Watt

64) The Tin Hat Review - (First Tin Hat perf. for civilians)

5 June 1940 : 5 perfs.

Windsor Hotel Ballroom. Staged by Keith Handyside

Cast includes : John Pratt; Robert Goodier; Lionel

Murton; Eileen Clifford

Studio Productions- Liliom - F.Molnar.2 Oct.1 perf.Dir.C.Rittenhouse- Favourite Scenes From Shakespeare - 7 May.2 perfs.

Special Productions

- Le Théâtre De Neptune En Nouvelle France  
by Marc Lescarbot  
MRT Française. 17 Dec. 1940 : 1 perf.
- Dear Octopus - Dodie Smith. Dir. F.Sadler  
MRT Rehearsal Group. Feb 1 perf.
- Three one-act plays by Montrealers  
18 March. 3 perfs. Organizing Dir. John Hoare
  - Bus To Nowhere - Janet McPhee
  - Her Affairs In Order - Mada Bolton
  - The Shoemakers Of Syracuse - John Hoare

The Company

Martha Allan; Whitfield Aston; Kay Berliner; Cora Carmichael;  
Kyra Carroll; Eileen Clifford; Leo Considine; Maria Consuelo;  
Kenneth Culley; Dorothy Danford; Muriel Duncan; George Frew;  
Reginald Genest; Robert Goodier; Hal Grindon; Eric Hall;  
Cedric Hands; Frankie Hearn; Cicely Hessey-White; Gillian  
Hessey-White; Peter Hessey-White; Joy Lafleur; Chester  
LeMaistre; Paulette Ludlow; Hector Mackenzie; Dorothy Mahan;  
Lionel Murton; Cecil Nichol; Lenore Osborne; Jack Ralph; John  
Ready; Charles Rittenhouse; Filmore Sadler; George Simpson;  
Sylvia Somers; Jack Sparks; Jeanne Steen; Pauline Trehub;  
Robert Watt; Cecil West; Betty Wilson; Robert Young.

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Eleventh Season : 1940 - 194165) Murray Hill - Leslie Howard

15 Oct. 1940 : 5 perfs.

Vict.Hall. Dir. M.Allan with Filmore Sadler. Setting - C.West  
 AMELIA = Norma Hobbs ALFRED WRIGLEY = Lawrence Henderson

66) Mary Of Scotland - Maxwell Anderson

26 Nov. 1940 : 5 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M. Allan with Cecil West

MARY = Marjorie Raven BOTHWELL = Peter Hessey-White

67) Gaslight - Patrick Hamilton

22 Jan. 1941 : 4 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. M.Allan with F. Sadler. Setting - Cecil West

MRS MANNINGHAM = Mildred Mitchell MR MANNINGHAM = F.Sadler

68) Rookery Nook - Ben Travers

5 March 1941 : 4 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. M.Allan. Setting - Hans Berends

GERTRUDE TWINE = Gertrude Woodford-Smith

GERALD POPKISS = Lionel Murton

69) Full House - Ivor Novello

April. 4 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. M. Allan with F. Sadler. Setting - Cecil West

MRS FRYNNE RODNEY = Martha Allan JOHN RODNEY = Chester LeMaistre

70) Tin Hat Revue Of 1941

26 May 1941 : 4 perfs.

Windsor Hotel. Geoffrey Merrill - Managing Dir. Tin Hats.

Studio Production

- Martine - Jean-Jacques Bernard

24 April 1941 : 3 perfs. Dir. John Hoare

The Company

George Alexander; Martha Allan; Erne Allet; Irene Almond;  
 Whitfield Aston; Kay Berliner; Griffith Brewer; Emmett Burke;  
 Eileen Clifford; Jack Clifford; Norma Darling; Alex Frazer;  
 Robert Goodier; Hal Grindon; Frankie Hearn; Lawrence  
 Henderson; Jackie Hern; Peter Hessey-White; John Hobart; Norma  
 Hobbs; William Hollenbeck; Irene Ingham; Percy Innes; Miss  
 Jenkins; Chester LeMaistre; Michael Leone; Cortland MacNeill;  
 Tom McBride; Fraser McCorquodale; Monica McGrath; Pat  
 McKinnon; John Menzies; Mildred Mitchell; A. Morrison-Baird;  
 Hilda Mulvany Gray; Lionel Murton; Dermot Palmer; Elsie Poole;  
 Marjorie Raven; Harvey Schwartz; Kathleen Spotswood;  
 Montgomery St-Alphonse; Sam Vatcher; Jacqueline Vogt; Cecil  
 West; Gertrude Woodford-Smith; Robert Young.

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Twelfth Season : 1941 - 194271) Here Today - George Oppenheimer

23 Oct. 1941 : 3 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. Filmore Sadler. Setting - Louis Mulligan  
 MARY HILLIARD = Joy Lafleur STANLEY DALE = Lionel Murton

72) My Heart's In The Highlands - William Saroyan

27 Nov. 1941 : 3 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. Filmore Sadler. Setting - Louis Mulligan  
 GRANDMOTHER = Bernice Fisher THE POET = Filmore Sadler

73) Someone At The Door - Dorothy & Campbell Christie

15 Jan. 1942 : 3 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. Cicely Hessey-White. Setting - H. Whittaker

SALLY MARTIN = Gillian Hessey-White    SGT SPEDDING = John Ready

74) Sixteen - Aimée and Philip Stuart

26 Feb. 1942 : 3 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. Filmore Sadler. Settings - Louis Mulligan

THE DAUGHTER = Avril Keiller    THE DOCTOR = Alex Thompson

75) Jupiter In Retreat - Janet McPhee and Herbert Whittaker

9 April 1942 : 3 perfs.

Vict. Hall. Dir. Charles Rittenhouse. Setting - H. Whittaker

ELLEN BYERS = Betty Taylor    JOE BYERS = Howard Osten

76) The Rivals - R.B.Sheridan

14 May 1942 : 3 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. F. Sadler. Settings - L.Mulligan

LYDIA LANGUISH = Marcie Drake-Brockman

ABSOLUTE = Chester LeMaistre

Studio Production

- Twelfth Night - W. Shakespeare

21 Jan. 1942 : 7 perfs.

The Company

George Alexander; Alfred Brunet; Cora Carmichael; Marigold Charlesworth; Beryl Dann; Mrs Basil Donn; Mary Douglas; Marcie Drake-Brockman; Bernice Fisher; Jack Fisher; Ena Gillespie; Robert Goodier; Hal Grindon; Cicely Hessey-White; Cyril Hessey-White; Gillian Hessey-White; Ranulph Hudston; David Hutchison; Irene Ingham; Avril Keiller; Joy Lafleur; Chester LeMaistre; Audrey Manson; Tom MacBride; Pat Meaney; A. Morrison-Baird; Dennis Murphy; Lionel Murton; Thelma

Nichols; Howard Osten; Teddy Pratt; John Ready; Filmore Sadler; Esther Solloway; Betty Taylor; Alex Thompson; Madeleine Thornton; Walter Wakefield; Philip Wark; Melvin Watson; Ian Baillie Williamson; Robert Young.

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Thirteenth Season : 1942 - 1943

77) The Warrior's Husband - Julian Thompson

26 Oct. 1942 : 4 perfs.

Victoria Hall. Dir. Edwyn Wayte

ANTIOPE = Adelaide Smith      THESEUS = Robert Goodier

78) Nine Pine Street - Carlton Miles & John Cotton

3 Dec. 1942 : 3 perfs.

Victoria Hall Dir. Mildred Mitchell. Set - Alison Reid

EFFIE HOLDEN = Mildred Mitchell      MR HOLDEN = Richard Matthew

79) Watch On The Rhine - Lillian Hellman

30 Jan. 1943 : 5 perfs.

Guy Street Playhouse. Dir. F. Sadler. Design - H. Whittaker

FANNY FARRELLY = Cicely Hessey-White      HERR MUELLER = R. Goodier

80) The Late Christopher Bean - Sydney Howard

6 March 1943 : 5 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Filmore Sadler. Set - Herbert Whittaker

MRS HAGGETT = Sally Starke      DR HAGGETT = Filmore Sadler

81) Distant Point - Alexander Nikolaevich Afinogenov

10 April 1943 : 7 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Ada Span. Set - Herbert Whittaker

MRS MATVEI = Adelaide Smith      GENERAL MATVEI = Charles Lewis

82) Tony Draws A Horse - Lesley Storm

15 May 1943 : 6 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Mildred Mitchell. Settings - Louis Mulligan

MRS PARSONS = Cicely Hessey-White

ALFRED PARSONS = Cyril Hessey-White

Studio Production

- Richard II - W.Shakespeare

6 Jan. 1943 : 5 perfs.

Experimental Production

- Church Street - Lennox Robinson

- Mozart And The Gray Steward - T.Wilder

8 Feb. 1 perf. Dir. Sybil Black. Sets - J.Mellor

The Company

Kathleen Andrews; Virginia Bogardus; Winifred Cam; Bernie Campbell; Eileen Clifford; Alfred Dann; Beryl Dann; Muriel Duncan; John Evely; John Farias; Jack Fisher; Robert Goodier; Hal Grindon; Dorothy Hearn; Cicely Hessey-White; Cyril Hessey-White; Lucille Joron; Claude Jutras; Mimi Jutras; Esther Kantor; Andree Langlois; Althea Maclean; Fran Malis; Gaston Marot; Althea Matheson; David Matheson; Gordon Mayers; Tom McBride; Margaret McKee; Agnes McKillop; Patrick Meaney; Carl Miskin; Mildred Mitchell; Philip Neilson; Marie Osier; Louise Pernau; Douglas Peterson; Victor Phillips; Elsie Poole; Charles Rittenhouse; Lillian Rowland; Filmore Sadler; Adelaide Smith; Sally Starke; Howard Stern; Betty Taylor; Thola Theilhaber; Sam Vatcher; Ross Walker; Robert Watt; Betty Wilson; Robert Young.

Fourteenth Season : 1943 - 1944

83) Men In Shadow - Mary Hayley Bell (adapted Ray Hargraves)

1 Nov. 1943 : 7 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. John Mellor. Settings - Quentin Lawrence

FRENCH PEASANT = Lucille Joron LEW = John Primm

84) Dark Eyes - E. Miramova & E. Leontovich

4 Dec. 1943 : 6 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Mildred Mitchell. Design - Alison Reid

TANYA KARPOVA = Rosanna Seaborn LARRY FIELD = Richard Spohr

85) Suspect - E. Percy & R. Denham

29 Jan. 1944 : 6 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Neil Little Setting - Vern Lynn

MRS SMITH = Rosemary Bourne THE CLERGYMAN = Alfred Dann

86) Out Of The Frying Pan - Francis Swann

4 March 1944 : 6 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. John Mellor

DOTTIE COBURN = Gwen Ford MR KENNY = John Evely

87) Hotel Universe - Philip Barry

15 April 1944 : 6 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Rosanna Seaborn. Setting - Quentin Lawrence

HOPE AMES = Mildred Mitchell MR FIELD = Earnest Buck

88) The Devil And All - John Hoare

20 May 1944 : 6 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. John Hoare Settings - Louis Mulligan

CHAMBERLAIN'S WIFE = Gertrude Woodford-Smith THE DUKE = Tom McBride

The Company

John Averill; Robert Baum; Max Belfur; Kirk Bergman; Germaine Bernier; Rosemary Bourne; Griffith Brewer; Earnest Buck; Alfred Dann; Norman Davis; Basil Donn; John Evely; John Farias; Gwen Ford; Cicely Howland; Walter Jackson; Peter Jacobson; Gordon Jones; Lucille Joron; Avril Keiller; Harold Kelly; Constance Kimber; Miriam Lunn; Mercedes MacKay; Tom McBride; Agnes McKillop; Saul Miller; Donald Milson; Mildred Mitchell; Adolphe Mueller; Louis Mulligan; Peter Overlands; Douglas Peterson; Gordon Pfeiffer; Victor Philips; Elsie Poole; John Primm; Walter Prior; David Rabinovitch; John Ready; Herbert Rose; Lillian Rowland; Rosanna Seaborn; Carmen Silvera; Nellie Smith; Richard Spohr; Stella Sprowell; Betty Taylor; Thola Theilhaber; Betty Treglown; Charles Wasserman; Rheta Wheatley; Gertrude Woodford-Smith; George Woods.

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Fifteenth Season : 1944 - 1945

89) And So To Bed - J.B.Fagan (based on Pepys' Diary)

30 Sept. 1944 : 6 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. John Ready Settings - Quentin Lawrence

Althea McLean = MISTRESS PEPYS Robert Watt = SAMUEL PEPYS

90) Guest In The House - H.Wilde & D. Eunson

3 Nov. 1944 : 7 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Mildred Mitchell Setting - Quentin Lawrence

ANN PROCTOR = Mildred Mitchell DAN PROCTOR = Bill Nelligan

91) Junior Miss - J.Chodorov & J.Fields

8 Dec. 1944 : 8 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Mildred Mitchell    Setting - Quentin Lawrence  
 JUDY = Joan Humphreys    HARRY GRAVES = Gordon Jones

92) On Borrowed Time - Paul Osborn

3 Feb. 1945 : 3 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Mildred Mitchell    Setting - Quentin Lawrence  
 NELLIE NORTHRUP = Florence Farebrother  
 JULIAN NORTHRUP = Whitfield Aston

93) There Shall Be No Night - Robert Sherwood

16 March 1945 : 7 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Roeberta Beatty    Setting - Quentin Lawrence  
 MIRANDA VLACHOS = Eleanor Stuart    DR VLACHOS = Chris Ellis

94) Candlelight - Siegfried Geyer

27 April 1945 : 7 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Mildred Mitchell    Setting - Quentin Lawrence  
 MARIE = Joy Lafleur    JOSEPH, THE VALET = Tom McBride

The Company

George Alexander; Sheldon Allan; Maud Aston; Whitfield Aston;  
 Paul Brennan; Griffith Brewer; Barbara Butler; John Cameron;  
 Joseph Carmer; Joan Ciceri; Eileen Clifford; Jackie Cornett;  
 Lesley Crombie; Gay Dorval; Christopher Ellis; Florence  
 Farebrother; Gwen Ford; Ronald Grant; Betsy Hay; Joan  
 Humphreys; Audrey Jay; Gordon Jones; Harold Kelly; Eric Koch;  
 Joy Lafleur; Jacques Leblanc; Frances Lindsay; Neil Little;  
 Miriam Lunn; Ruth Martin; Lucille Masson; Tom McBride; Agnes  
 McKillop; Althea McLean; Charles Miller; Mildred Mitchell;  
 Adolphe Mueller; Bill Nelligan; Thelma Nichols; Lillian Crum

Niderost; Patsy Oggy; Earl Pennington; Henry Ramer; John Ready; Charles Rittenhouse; Herbert Rose; Rosanna Seaborn; Adelaide Smith; Rudy Stoekel; Eleanor Stuart; Lawrence Thor; Robert Watt; Margery Whitelaw; Edward Wilson; George Woods; Ralph Zimmer.

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Sixteenth Season : 1945 - 1946

95) Viceroy Sarah - Norman Ginsbury

12 Oct. 1945 : 7 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Rosanna Seaborn Settings - Hans Berends

SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH = Joy Lafleur

THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH = Tom McBride

96) Snafu - L.Solomon & H.Buckman

30 Nov. 1945 : 7 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Mildred Mitchell Setting - Hans Berends

MRS STEVENS = Mildred Mitchell MR STEVENS = Rudolph Stoekel

97) She Stoops To Conquer - Oliver Goldsmith

18 Jan. 1946 : 8 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Maud Aston Setting - Hans Berends

KATE = Agnes McKillop HASTINGS = Robert Watt

98) The Beautiful People - William Saroyan

1 March 1946 : 9 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Charles Rittenhouse Setting - Hans Berends

AGNES WEBSTER = Ruth Martin JONAH WEBSTER = Jack Hiscock's

99) The Old Ladies - Rodney Ackland (from Hugh Walpole)

3 April 1946 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Director/Set designer - Herbert Whittaker  
 SPINSTER = Mary Douglas      MOTHER = Leslie Crombie  
 GYPSY = Jean Castellani

100) The Corn Is Green - Emlyn Williams

10 May 1946 : 8 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Roeberta Beatty      Setting - Hans Berends  
 MISS MOFFAT = Doreen Lewis      MORGAN EVANS = Eric Donkin

The Company

Donald Armstrong; Whitfield Aston; Malou Bampton; Paul  
 Brennan; Morley Calvert; Jean Castellani; Leo Ciceri; Eileen  
 Clifford; Leslie Crombie; Kenneth Culley; Beryl Dann; Eric  
 Donkin; Mary Douglas; Gwen Ford; Ivor Francis; Myron Galloway;  
 Hilda Gray; Vivian Hayes; Jack Hiscocks; Ranulph Hudston;  
 Avril Keiller; Harold Kelley; Joy Lafleur; Olive Sanborn Lead;  
 Doreen Lewis; Frances Lindsay; Miriam Lunn; Roy Malcouronne;  
 Ruth Martin; Tom McBride; Agnes McKillop; Mildred Mitchell;  
 John Olsburgh; Douglas Peterson; Elsie Poole; John Ready;  
 Madeleine Sherwood; Rudolph Stoekel; Betty Treglown; Amba  
 Trott; Walter Wakefield; Robert Watt; Tim Whelan; Gwyn  
 Williams; Edward Wilson; George Woods.

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Seventeenth Season : 1946 - 1947

101) Uncle Harry - Thomas Job

10 Oct. 1946 : 9 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Jean de Savoye      Settings - Hans Berends  
 LETTIE QUINCY = Eileen Clifford      HARRY QUINCY = Robert Goodier

102) Asmodée (The Intruder) - François Mauriac. (Tr.A.Bartlett)

28 Nov. 1946 : Dec. 9 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Pierre Dagenais Setting - Hans Berends

MARCELLE DE BARTHAS = Adelaide Smith THE TUTOR = C.Rittenhouse

103) Amphitryon 38 - Jean Giraudoux. (Tr.S.N.Behrman)

16 Jan. 1947 : 9 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Roeberta Beatty Setting - Hans Berends

ALKMENA = Cicely Howland AMPHITRYON = Ranulph Hudston

104) Biography - S.N.Behrman

6 March 1947 : 9 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Herbert Whittaker Setting - Hans Berends

MARION FROUDE = Betty Wilson RICHARD KURT = John Drexler

105) The Barretts Of Wimpole Street - R.Besier

10 April 1947 : 9 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Roeberta Beatty Setting - Hans Berends

ELIZABETH BARRETT = Eleanor Stuart MR BARRETT = George Alexander

106) Joan Of Lorraine - Maxwell Anderson

15 May 1947 : 9 perfs. plus 2 additional.

Guy St. Dir. Malcolm Morley Setting - Hans Berends

JOAN = Marjorie (Raven) Brewer STAGE DIRECTOR = Gordon Jones

School of the Theatre

- Three One Act Plays - Thornton Wilder

13 June 1947 : 2 perfs. Dir. Ch. Rittenhouse

The Company

George Alexander; Cameron Amery; Peter Armstrong; Eddie

Asselin; Suzanne Avon; Paul Blouin; J.Clement Boyd; Griffith  
 Brewer; Marjorie Brewer; Victor Charles; Leo Ciceri; Eileen  
 Clifford; Joan Coombes; Kenneth Culley; John Dando; Dorothy  
 Danford; Eric Donkin; John Drexler; Myron Galloway; Henry  
 Gamer; Robert Goodier; Gillian Hessey-White; Frank Hoffer;  
 Cicely Howland; Marjorie Hudston; Ranulph Hudston; Gordon  
 Jones; Marion Keith; Mary Lindsay; Roy Malcouronne; Albert  
 Miller; Charles Miller; Neil O'Keefe; Patsy Oggy; John  
 Olsburgh; Lenore Osborne; Rosemary Palin; Douglas Peterson;  
 Christopher Plummer; Elsie Poole; Charles Rittenhouse; Alicia  
 Rogers; Phyllis Schechter; Rosanna Seaborn; Adelaide Smith;  
 Eleanor Stuart; Christopher Wade; Walter Wakefield; Virginia  
 Watt; Gwyn Williams; Betty Wilson; Edward Wilson; George Woods

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Eighteenth Season : 1947 - 1948

107) The Two Shepherds - G.Martinez-Sierra

16 Oct. 1947 : 10 perfs.

Guy St.Dir. Charles Rittenhouse          Setting - Hans Berends

PRIEST'S SISTER = Maud Whitmore    DON ANTONIO = Alfred Gallagher

108) While The Sun Shines - Terence Rattigan

20 Nov. 1947 : 10 perfs.

Guy St.Dir. Rosanna Seaborn          Set Design - Hans Berends

LADY RANDALL = Mary Douglas    EARL OF HARPENDEN = John Drexler

109) Ah, Wilderness! - Eugene O'Neill

15 Jan. 1948 : 10 perfs.

Guy St.Dir. Herbert Whittaker    Sets - Hans Berends

THE MOTHER = Lillian Niderost    THE FATHER = Gerald Rowan

110) Juno And The Paycock - Sean O'Casey

26 Feb. 1948 : 10 perfs.

Guy St.Dir. Jean de Savoye

JUNO = Alice Rogers    THE PAYCOCK = Brendan Fahey

111) All My Sons - Arthur Miller

13 April 1948 : 5 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Roeberta Beatty    Setting - Hans Berends

KATE KELLER = Mary Douglas    JOE KELLER = Gerald Rowan

112) I Remember Mama - John Van Druten

25 May 1948 : 5 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. Herbert Whittaker

MAMA = Elizabeth Leese    PAPA = Charles Lewis

Studio Production (Three one-acts) 11 Dec. 1947 : 2 perfs.

- The Lovely Miracle - P.Johnson.Dir.Sybil Black
- The Valiant - H.Hall/R.Middlemass. Dir.Lee Prime
- Aria Da Capo - E. St.V. Millay. Dir.M.Galloway

Studio Production (3 one-acts by Robertson Davies) 19 Mar.3 perfs.

- Eros At The Breakfast Table - Dir.R.Wheatley
- Overlaid - Dir. Rheta Wheatley
- Hope Deferred - Dir. Dorothy Pfeiffer

School of the Theatre : Guy Street Playhouse

- Dear Octopus - Dodie Smith

10 June 1948 : 2 perfs. Dir. Roeberta Beatty

The Company

Geoffrey Ardenne; Suzanne Avon; Hector Belton; Catherine

Bensley; Dennis Berrigan; Barney Bloom; Clem Boyd; Shirley Boyn; Griffith Brewer; Marie Brewer; Vernis Christie; Douglass Burns Clarke; John Colicos; Jackie Cornett; Kenneth Culley; Fred Devlin; Eric Donkin; Mary Douglas; John Drexler; Brendan Fahey; Alfred Gallagher; Henry Gamer; Eva Gillespie; Barbara Hanshaw; Mary Hinton; Peggy Horton; Joan Huestis; Dave Hutchison; Michael Kano; Elizabeth Kennedy; Stephen Kennedy; Elizabeth Leese; Charles Lewis; David Luck; Lola Malen; Betty May; Althea McLean; Bertha Mercowitz; Mildred Mitchell; Lucy Murphy; Eileen Nemptin; Lillian Niderost; Neil O'Keefe; Dorothy Perkins; Alice Rogers; Sheila Rogers; Burt Rosen; Gerald Rowan; Douglas Sanderson; Moira Sheehy; Madeleine Sherwood; Betty Sinclair; Malcolm Smith; Tim Stapleton; Meribeth Stobie; Peter Tapp; George Tynan; Thomas Walker; Isabel Weinrauch; Charlotte Wellock; Rheta Wheatley; Tim Whelan; Maud Whitmore; Gwyn Williams; Edward Wilson.

Nineteenth Season : 1948 - 1949

113) Will Shakespeare - Clemence Dane

19 Oct. 1948 : 6 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. Roeberta Beatty      Setting - Hans Berends

QUEEN ELIZABETH = Eleanor Stuart

WILL SHAKESPEARE = John Colicos

114) Help Yourself - Paul Vulpius

27 Nov. 1948 : 10 perfs

Guy St.      Dir. Lee Prime      Settings - Hans Berends

THE STENOGRAPHER = Norma Hobbs      THE CHAIRMAN = George Woods

115) The Winslow Boy - Terence Rattigan

27 Jan. 1949 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Myron Galloway Setting - Hans Berends

MRS WINSLOW = Rheta Wheatley RONNIE WINSLOW = Eric Donkin

116) The Glass Menagerie - Tennessee Williams

31 March 1949 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Herbert Whittaker Setting - H. Whittaker

AMANDA = Amelia Hall LAURA = Betty Taylor Fenwick

117) What Every Woman Knows - J.M. Barrie

24 May 1949 : 5 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. Jean de Savoye Settings - Hans Berends

MAGGIE SHAND = Mary Douglas JOHN SHAND M.P. = Peter Gollick

Studio Production : Guy Street : 4 Nov. 1948 : 3 perfs.

- No Exit - J.P. Sartre. Dir. M. Galloway

- Lord Byron's Love Letter - T. Williams

Dir. Dorothy Pfeiffer

Studio Production : Guy Street : 2 March 1949 : 4 perfs.

- This Way To The Tomb R. Duncan/Benjamin Britten

Stage Dir. Amelia Hall. Setting - G. Brewer

ST ANTHONY = Tom McBride

Studio Production : Guy Street : 21 April 1949 : 3 perfs.

Three Canadian one-act plays

- Legend - Hilda Hooke. Dir. Carlotta Foster

- Bus To Nowhere - Janet McPhee (author/dir.)

- Right About Face - Dorothy Pfeiffer (author/dir.)

School of the Theatre : Guy Street : 3 June 1949 : 2 perfs.

- The Cradle Song - G.Martinez-Sierra

Dir. Roeberta Beatty

The Company

Maud Aston; Murray Atkinson; Suzanne Avon; Sonia Baker; Arthur Bird; Grace Bond; Aubrey Boyd; Griffith Brewer; Joe Colby; John Colicos; Kenneth Culley; Fred Devlin; Eric Donkin; Mary Douglas; Christopher Ellis; Betty Taylor Fenwick; Alfred Gallagher; John Gibbon; Sondra Gibson; Richard Gilbert; Evelyn Giles; Peter Gollick; Amelia Hall; Gillian Hessey-White; Norma Hobbs; Ranulph Hudston; Dave Hutchison; Harold Kelley; Richard Kronold; David Luck; Jean Macdonald; Roy Malcouronne; Albert Mann; Tom McBride; John More; Sylvio Narizzano; Lenore Osborne; David Pemberton-Smith; Donald Perry; George Powell; Bruce Raymond; Ruth Risebrow; Sheila Rogers; Leonard Rowland; James Sage; Adelaide Smith; Albert Spilker; Tim Stapleton; John Stewart; Bonar Stuart; Eleanor Stuart; Hugh Taschereau; John Russell Thompson; Michelle Tisseyre; Walter Wakefield; Thomas Walker; Virginia Watt; Rheta Wheatley; Gwyn Williams; Edward Wilson; George Woods; Robert Young.

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Twentieth Season : 1949 - 1950118) Trelawney Of The 'Wells' - A.W.Pinero

18 Oct. 1949 : 4 perfs.

Moyse Hall. Dir. C.Rittenhouse Settings - Hans Berends

\*\* TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION \*\*119) The Constant Wife - W.S.Maugham

23 Nov. 1949 : 12 perfs.

Guy St. Director/Set Designer - Louis Mulligan

CONSTANCE = Nancy Graham JOHN MIDDLETON = Cedric Hands

120) The Sabine Women - Leonid Andreyev

2 Feb. 1950 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Janet McPhee Sets - Hans Berends

CLEOPATRA = Virginia Watt SABINE LEADER = D.B. Clarke

Curtain Raiser : Ile - Eugene O'Neill

Dir. Dorothy Pfeiffer Setting - Hans Berends

MRS KEENEY = Diane Romney CAPTAIN KEENEY = Ronald Kinsman

121) An Inspector Calls - J.B. Priestley

23 March 1950 : 9 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Jean de Savoye Setting - Hans Berends

MRS BIRLING = Maud Aston INSPECTOR GOOLE = Kenneth Culley

122) The Heiress - R. and A. Goetz

11 May 1950 : 6 perfs. plus 3 additional perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Roeberta Beatty Setting - Hans Berends

CATHERINE SLOPER = Mary Douglas DR SLOPER = Richard Kronold

Studio Productions : Guy Street

- Coriolanus - W. Shakespeare 15 Dec. 1949 : 4 perfs.

Dir. Evelyn Smith : VOLUMNIA = Renée Atwood

CORIOLANUS = Richard Gilbert

- Right You Are (If You Think So) - L. Pirandello

23 Feb. 1950 : 3 perfs. Dir. Jack Howlett

- Fortune, My Foe - R. Davies. 8 June : 3 perfs.

Dir. Charles Rittenhouse

The Company

Rene Almond; Suzette Amos; Peter Armstrong; Maud Aston; Mary Barclay; Richard Barclay; Denise Bensha; Catherine Bensley; Paul Blouin; Chet Braaten; Paul Brennan; Polly Breul; Griffith Brewer; Marjorie Broome; D.B. Clarke; Melvin Cochran; Leslie Crombie; Marion Dennis; Winifred Dennis; Mary Douglas; Richard Easton; Ray Eshelby; Henry Gamer; John Gibbon; Sondra Gibson; Richard Gilbert; Peter Gollick; John Goodier; Nancy Graham; Hilda Gray; Cedric Hands; Doris Hedges; Mary Hinton; Ranulph Hudston; Talbot Johnston; Ronald Kinsman; Franz Kraemer; Richard Kronold; Doreen Lewis; David MacCallan; Albert Mann; Cynthia Michaelis; Gerald Mones; John More; Carl Notkin; Douglas Peterson; Christopher Plummer; Ruth Risebrow; Robert Robinson; Sheila Rogers; Diana Romney; Rosanna Seaborn; J.R. Thompson; Michelle Tisseyre; Sheila Tremblay; Walter Wakefield; Thomas Walker; Gwyn Williams; John Wiseman.

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Twenty-First Season : 1950 - 1951

123) Goodbye, My Fancy - Fay Kanin

19 Oct. 1950 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Jean de Savoye Setting - Hans Berends

AGATHA REID = Mildred Mitchell JAMES MERRILL = Charles Miller

124) The Infernal Machine - Jean Cocteau

22 Nov. 1950 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Jack Howlett Settings - Hans Berends

JOCASTA = Virginia Watt OEDIPUS = Christopher Plummer

125) The Silver Whistle - R.McEnroe

25 Jan. 1951 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Mildred Mitchell Setting - Hans Berends

MISS TRIPP = Vernis Christie OLIVER ERWENTER = Tom McBride

126) A Doll's House - H.Ibsen

29 March 1951 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Polly Breul Setting - Hans Berends

NORA = Elizabeth Christensen TORVALD HELMER = Jack Howlett

127) The Madwoman Of Chailot - Jean Giraudoux

17 May 1951 : 10 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Lee Prime Setting - Hans Berends

COUNTESS AURELIA = Maud Whitmore THE RAGPICKER = Kenneth Haslam

Studio Productions : Guy Street- Antigone - J.Anouilh. 13 Dec. 1951 : 4 perfs.

Dir. Roeberta Beatty Setting - Hans Berends

ANTIGONE = Yvette Brind'Amour CREON = K.Haslam

- Blood Wedding - F.Garcia Lorca. 14 Feb. 4 perfs.

Dir. Myron Galloway Setting - G.Brewer

- A Man Of Destiny - G.B.Shaw. 25 Ap. 1951 : 4 perfs.- A Phoenix Too Frequent - C. Fry. Dir.D.B.ClarkeThe Company

Jacob Alleyne; Mary Bampton; Roeberta Beatty; Jeannine  
 Beaubien; Guy Belanger; Catherine Bensley; Madeleine Bird;  
 Joan Blackman; Tom Blackman; Paul Blouin; Sheila Boland;  
 Robert Bolger; Aubrey Boyd; Polly Breul; Yvette Brind'Amour;

Louis Burggraf; Janet Campbell; Lawrence Carlin; Alex Carlton;  
 Elizabeth Christensen; Vernis Christie; Melvin Cochran; Gerry  
 Corner; Kenneth Culley; Alfred Dann; Beryl Dann; Marion  
 Dennis; Winifred Dennis; Richard Easton; Martta Ensio; Fred  
 Fahre; Brahm Feldman; John Fowles; Henry Gamer; John Gibbon;  
 Richard Gilbert; Reginald Groome; Muriel Haltrecht; Mathilde  
 Hanson; Patricia Harris; Kenneth Haslam; Ray Hawn; Gillian  
 Hessey-White; Mary Hinton; Stella Hopkins; Jack Howlett;  
 Ranulph Hudston; Olivia Kimpton; Rex Loring; Grahame Lowe;  
 Peter Lowndes; Tom McBride; Estelle Mendelssohn; Bertha  
 Merowitz; Cynthia Michaelis; Charles Miller; Mildred Mitchell;  
 John Moore; Adolphe Mueller; Billie Murray; Heather Murray;  
 Douglas Peterson; Dorothy Pfeiffer; Christopher Plummer; Henry  
 Ramer; Charles Rittenhouse; Ina Robertson; Marjorie Roof;  
 Leslie Roscoe; Marion Rosenzweig; Lillian Rowland; Rita Roy;  
 Jan Schwartz; Adelaide Smith; Orea Sneed; Sally Starke; Del  
 Stuart; James Tapp; Pauline Trehub; Virginia Watt; Maud  
 Whitmore; Gwyn Williams; Donald Wilson; Edward Wilson; George  
 Wood; Vicky Yukon.

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Twenty-Second Season : 1951 - 1952

128) Home At Seven - R.C.Sherriff

17 Oct. 1951 : 10 perfs. plus 2 Rotary-sponsored perfs.

at Town of Mount Royal High School Auditorium.

Guy St. Dir. Jean de Savoye Setting - Hans Berends

MRS PRESTON = Margaret Pitt DAVID PRESTON = Alfred Gallagher

129) The Curious Savage - John Patrick

22 Nov. 1951 : 9 perfs.

Guy St. Dir. Charles Rittenhouse      Setting - Hans Berends  
 THE MOTHER = Gwyn Williams      THE DOCTOR = Peter Armstrong

130) You Never Can Tell - G.B.Shaw

17 Jan. 1952 : 9 perfs. and 3 additional perfs.

Guy.St.      Dir. Lee Prime      Settings - Hans Berends

MRS CLANDON = Maud Whitmore      PHILIP CLANDON = Paul Blouin

NOTE : Guy Street Playhouse destroyed by fire 5 March 1952.

131) Harvey - Mary Chase

1 April 1952 : 5 perfs.

Town of Mt.Royal High School.      Dir. M.Mitchell.      Set-H.Berends

VETA SIMMONS = Winifred Dennis      ELWOOD P. DOWD = Eric Matheson

132) Second Threshold - Philip Barry

28 May 1952 : 4 perfs.

T.M.R.H.S.      Dir. Roeberta Beatty      Setting - Hans Berends

MIRANDA BOLTON = Mary Douglas      JOSIAH BOLTON = Barry Morse

Studio Productions : Guy Street

Double Bill: 12 Dec.4 perfs. Dir.E.Jousse.Set-H.Berends

- The Respectable Prostitute - J.P.Sartre

Yvette Brind'Amour / Percy Rodriguez

- The Proposal - A.Chekov

27 Feb. : 4 perfs.

- The Enchanted - J.Giraudoux      Dir. Franz Kraemer

THE INSPECTOR = Myron Galloway

THE SUPERVISOR = William Shatner

5 June : 3 perfs. : Trinity Memorial Church

- An Enemy Of The People - H.Ibsen

Dir. Dorothy Pfeiffer Setting - G.Brewer

MRS STOCKMAN = Frances Lindsay

DR STOCKMAN = Robert Robinson

The Company

Peter Armstrong; John Asquith; Lynde Ballantyne; Paul Blouin;  
 Griffith Brewer; Yvette Brind'Amour; Janet Campbell; Larry  
 Carlin; Alexander Carlton; D.B.Clarke; Kenneth Culley;  
 Winifred Dennis; James Donnelly; Mary Douglas; Ralph Taylor  
 Fenwick; George Fuller; Alfred Gallagher; Myron Gallagher;  
 Henry Gamer; Richard Gilbert; Sylvia Gillespie; Hilda Mulvaney  
 Gray; Patricia Harris; Kenneth Haslam; Paul Hazel; Richard  
 Hopkinson; Peggy Horton; Ranulph Hudston; Fran Hughes; Dave  
 Hutchison; Talbot Johnson; Alexander Kerby; Mary Lindsay Kerr;  
 Ronald Kinsman; Frances Lindsay; Robert Long; John MacCrae;  
 Ralph Marven; Eric Matheson; Muriel McMaster; Cynthia  
 Michaelis; Charles Miller; Barry Morse; Adolphe Mueller;  
 Lillian Crum Niderost; Helen Pfeiffer; Margaret Pitt; Henry  
 Ramer; Pauline Rathbone; Alf Redgell; Dolores Reid; Sylvia  
 Reid; Robert Robinson; Percy Rodriguez; Marjorie Root; Jack  
 Sexton; William Shatner; Elizabeth Sifton; Gertrude Woodford  
 Smith; Philip Thresher; Walter Wakefield; Maud Whitmore; Gwyn  
 Williams; Edward Wilson.

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Twenty Third Season : 1952 - 1953133) Traveller's Joy - Arthur Macrae

Victoria Hall. 14 Oct. 1952 : 2 perfs.

Westhill High School. 2 perfs.

Dir. Dorothy Pfeiffer      Setting - Hans Berends

MRS PELHAM = Gwyn Williams      MR PELHAM = Robert Robinson

134) The Late Edwina Black - W.Dinner and W.Morum

Victoria Hall. 18 Nov. 1952 : 2 perfs.

Westhill H.S. 2 perfs.      Dir. Charles Rittenhouse

ELIZABETH GRAHAM = Betty Taylor Fenwick

GREGORY BLACK = Kenneth Davey

135) Studio Production

Tartuffe - Molière (trans. Miles Malleon)

Victoria Hall. 10 Dec. 1953 : 2 perfs.

Dir. Guy Beaulne      Setting - Griffith Brewer

ELMIRE = Michelle Tisseyre      TARTUFFE = Ronald Kinsman

136) Pygmalion -- G.B.Shaw

Victoria Hall. 10 March 1953. 2 perfs.      Westhill H.S. 2 perfs.

Dir. Jean de Savoye      Sets - Eugene Jousse

LIZA DOLITTLE = Jacqueline Hyland      PROF.HIGGINS = Duncan Shaddick

137) Anna Christie - Eugene O'Neill

Victoria Hall. 5 May 1953 : 2 perfs.      Westhill H.S. 2 perfs.

Dir. Yvette Brind'Amour      Setting - Tom Owen

ANNA = Elizabeth Leese      CHRIS CHRISTOPHERSON = Douglas Peterson

Studio Productions

- Three Canadian one-act plays : Victoria Hall. 17 Feb. 2 perfs.

- Rise And Shine - Mrs.G.Cadogan.Dir.W.Dennis

- The Line - Graham Murray.Dir. C. Michaelis

- The Dream Unwinds - Neil Harris. Dir. J. Campbell  
 - A Rehearsed Reading  
 - Mr Bolfry - James Bridie  
 Victoria Hall. 21 Ap. 2 perfs. Dir. Norma Springford

The Company

Dennis Berrigan; George Bloomfield; Jerry Cowan; Jack Crisp;  
 Dorothy Danford; Kenneth Davey; Marion Dennis; Winifred  
 Dennis; Olive de Wilton; Brahm Feldman; Betty Taylor Fenwick;  
 Bertrand Gagnon; Ena Gillespie; Dawn Greenhalgh; Joyce Hall;  
 John Hempstead; David Hutchison; Jacqueline Hyland; David  
 Jager; Ronald Kinsman; Elizabeth Leese; Dale MacDonald;  
 Corinne Orenstein; Douglas Peterson; Martin Petlock; Helen  
 Pfeiffer; Elsie Poole; Dolores Reid; Robert Robinson; Howard  
 Ryshpan; Bruce Scott; Duncan Shaddick; Elizabeth Sifton; Mae  
 Skeach; Alexis Sokoloff; Nan Stewart; Olav Ternstrom; Philip  
 Thresher; Michelle Tisseyre; Walter Wakefield; Maud Whitmore;  
 Gwyn Williams; Jack Williams; Edward Willis; Barbara Wood;  
 Bruce Woodell; Bernice Wuerch; Nat Zitner ; Jack Zolov.

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Twenty-Fourth Season : 1953 - 1954

NOTE: MRT no longer numbers productions from the start of the  
 company. The numbers which follow have been added to simplify  
 reference.

1) Saint Joan - G.B. Shaw

14 Oct. 1953 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Charles Rittenhouse Settings - A. Voronka

JOAN = Denise Pelletier THE DAUPHIN = Tom Owen

2) Life With Mother - H.Lindsay & R.Crouse

25 Nov. 1953 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Lee Prime Settings - Arthur Voronka

MOTHER = Ena Gillespie FATHER = Ronald Kinsman

3) The Deep Blue Sea - Terence Rattigan

27 Jan. 1954 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Tom Owen Set - Arthur Voronka

HESTER COLLYER = Jacqueline Hyland SIR WM. COLLYER = Ivor Barry

4) His Excellency - Dorothy and Campbell Christie

17 March 1954 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Cicely Hessey-White Setting - A.Voronka

LADY KIRKMAN = Maud Whitmore HIS EXCELLENCY = Ian Vickerstaff

5) The Miser - Molière

5 May 1954 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Guy Beaulne Setting - Peter Symcox

ELISE = Dawn Greenhalgh HARPAGON = Tom Owen

MRT Theatre Club- The Menaechmi - Plautus

Oct. 1953 : 1 perf. Dir. Stephen Porter

Special Production- Saint Joan - G.B.Shaw

Westhill H.S. 23 Aug. 1954 : 7 perfs.

This prod. was part of the Montreal Summer Festival and used many of the cast from MRT's October 1953 production. Participants were paid.

The Company

Paul Almond; George Barnes; Ivor Barry; Dennis Berrigan; Paul

Blouin; Griffith Brewer; James Cane; Kenneth Culley; Kenneth Davies; Marion Dennis; Winifred Dennis; Gordon Diver; Gordon Epstein; Marion Erdely; Alfred Gallagher; John Gibbon; Ena Gillespie; Hilda Gray; Dawn Greenhalgh; Ranulph Hudston; Jacqueline Hyland; Evan Jones; Ronald Kinsman; Richard Long; Edward McGibbon; Leslie Millin; Tom Owen; Jean-Louis Paris; Denise Pelletier; Douglas Peterson; Bruce Raymond; Josie Retino; Charles Rittenhouse; David Rittenhouse; Robert Robinson; Leslie Roscoe; Bert Rosen; Basil Schapiro; Jacques Souvi; Sally Starke; Peter Symcox; Ian Vickerstaff; Hal Walkley; Frank Walter; Nancy Warren; Maud Whitmore; Edward Willis; Jack Williston.

Twenty-Fifth Season : 1954 - 1955

1) The Crucible - Arthur Miller

13 Oct. 1954 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. and Design - Eugene Jousse

ABIGAIL = Joan Young JOHN PROCTOR = Griffith Brewer

\*\* 25th. Anniversary Production \*\*

2) Captain Carvallo : Denis Cannon

24 Nov. 1954 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Cicely Hessey-White Settings - G. Brewer

PREACHER'S WIFE = Laurel Bailey CARVALLO = Keith Herrington

3) Bonaventure Charlotte Hastings

26 Jan. 1955 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Bruce Raymond Settings - A. Voronka

Kay Ryan = SISTER MARY BONAVENTURE B. Fitzgibbon = DR JEFFREYS

4) The Devil's Disciple G.B.Shaw

9 March. 1955 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Donald McGill Settings - A. Voronka

JUDITH ANDERSON = Diane Fish DICK DUDGEON = Ed McGibbon

5) The School For Wives Molière

27 April 1955 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Stephen Porter Setting - Peter Symcox

AGNES = Gerda Rother ARNOLPHE = Bruce Raymond

MRT Theatre Club Production- Selected Scenes from Shakespeare

YWCA Auditorium 2 Dec. 1954 : 2 perfs.

Eleanor Stuart &amp; Richard Gilbert

The Company

Miriam Asher; William Austin; Laurel Bailey; Griffith Brewer;  
 Violet Bussey; James Cain; Ray Cunnington; Donna d'Hondt;  
 Olive de Wilton; Brendan Dillon; Heather Diplock; Gordon  
 Diver; Gordon Epstein; Diana Fish; Basil FitzGibbon; Richard  
 Gilbert; James Goodwin; Paul Hazen; Keith Herrington; Syd  
 Horne; Winnie Jones; Mary Kerr; Ronald Kinsman; James Kirk;  
 Victor Knight; Tristan Korman; Charles Luke; John MacRae;  
 William Maher; John McGibbon; Barry Meyer; Thelma Monk; Rita  
 Ray; Bruce Raymond; Ruby Renaut; Anne Robertson; Gerda Rother;  
 Margaret Roy; Kay Ryan; Peter Salzer; Basil Schapiro;  
 Elizabeth Sifton; Alexis Sokoloff; Eleanor Stuart; Peter  
 Symcox; Ruth Tavrages; Sam Vatcher; Joan Young.

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Twenty-Sixth Season : 1955 - 1956\*\* Festival of Comedy \*\* (with Professional Wing)1) My Sister Eileen - J.Fields & J.Chodorov

12 Oct. 1955 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S. Dir. Jean de Savoye      Tech. Advisor - E. Jousse  
Setting - A. Voronka

EILEEN = Eileen Hogan      LONIGAN = Michael Thompson

2) When We Are Married - J.B.Priestley

23 Nov. 1955 : 4 perfs.

Westhill H.S.      Dir. Jean de Savoye      Settings - A. Voronka

MARIA HELLIWELL = Ruth Reed ALDERMAN HELLIWELL = Basil FitzGibbon

3) The Apple Cart - G.B.Shaw

23 Jan. 1956 : 6 perfs.

Van Horne H.S.      Dir. Lee Prime      Settings - Arthur Voronka

ORINTHIA = Jacqueline Hyland      KING MAGNUS = Ronald Kinsman

4) The Time Of The Cuckoo - Arthur Laurents

27 Feb. 1956 : 6 perfs.

Westhill H.S.      Dir. Henry Ramer      Settings - Arthur Voronka

LEONA SAMISH = Kay Ryan      RENATO DI ROSSI = Adolphe Mueller

5) Lady Windermere's Fan - Oscar Wilde

21 April 1956 : 6 perfs.

Westhill H.S.      Dir. Stephen Porter      Settings - Arthur Voronka

MRS ERLYNNE = Ruth Dahan      LORD WINDERMERE = Gerald Klein

The CompanyPeter Armstrong; William Austin; Catherine Bensley; Dennis  
Berrigan; Bernard Blumer; Peter Bodi; Rodney Bunker; Shirley

Collins; Keith Coulter; Ruth Dahan; Beryl Dann; Leigh Ellemor;  
 Gordon Epstein; Kevin Fenlon; Basil Fitzgibbon; Ralph Harper;  
 John Hempstead; Eileen Hogan; Andrew Hutchings; Jacqueline  
 Hyland; Ronald Kinsman; Gerald Klein; Victor Knight; Shirley  
 Lamet; Gordon Limbrick; Eric Matheson; Peggy McKeown; Cynthia  
 Michaelis; Adolphe Mueller; Dino Narizzano; Sally O'Neill;  
 Ruth Reed; Peter Reid; Ruby Renaut; Rita Roy; Kay Ryan;  
 Frederick Smith; Nan Stewart; Maureen Stoker; Michael  
 Thompson; Kay Tremblay; Arthur Voronka; Barbara Ward; Maud  
 Whitmore; Dennis Whyte; Joan Wilson; Jean Young; Francesca  
 Zoloski.

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Twenty-Seventh Season : 1956 - 1957 : 1st Professional Season

\*\* Season of Great Playwrights \*\*

1) The Lady's Not For Burning - Christopher Fry

17 Oct. 1956 : 8 perfs.

Van Horne H.S. Dir. Julia Murphy Setting - Arthur Voronka

JENNET = Joan Watts THOMAS MENDIP = John Hempstead

2) The Rainmaker - N.Richard Nash

21 Nov. 1956 : 8 perfs.

Van Horne H.S. Dir. Henry Ramer Setting - Arthur Voronka

LIZZIE CURRIE = Kay Ryan BILL STARBUCK = Jimmy Tapp

3) Androcles And The Lion - G.B.Shaw

16 Jan. 1957 : 4 perfs.

Van Horne H.S. Dir. Julia Murphy Setting - Arthur Voronka

LAVINIA = Mignon Elkins ANDROCLES = William Robert Fournier

Curtain Raiser : Sorry, Wrong Number - Lucille Fletcher

4) Kind Sir - Norman Krasna

20 Feb. 1957 : 8 perfs.

Van Horne H.S. Dir. Jose Vega Setting - Arthur Voronka  
 JANE KIMBALL = Mary Savidge PHILIP CLAIR = Randy Echols

5) The Love Of Four Colonels - Peter Ustinov

20 March 1957 : 8 perfs.

Van Horne H.S. Dir. Pierre Dagenais. Setting - Arthur Voronka  
 THE BEAUTY = Nini Durand THE WICKED FAIRY = Percy Rodriguez

6) The Remarkable Mr Pennypacker - Liam O'Brien

24 April 1957 : 8 perfs.

Van Horne H.S. Dir. Jean de Savoye Setting - Arthur Voronka  
 THE MOTHER = Jill Showell MR PERRY = Norman Ettlenger

MRT Theatre Club- The Good Woman Of Setzuan - B.Brecht

7 Feb. 1957 : 3 perfs.

Van Horne H.S. Dir. Eugene Jousse

SHEN TAY = Ellen Balkan

The Company

Ellan Balkan; Boudha Bradon; Griffith Brewer; Kenneth Culley;  
 Jack Curran; Louis Cusson; Dorothy Danford; Ken Davey; Nini  
 Durand; Randy Echols; Mignon Elkins; Norman Ettlenger; Diana  
 Fish; Basil Fitzgibbon; William Robert Fournier; Alfred  
 Gallagher; Roger Garceau; John Hempstead; Henry Ramer;  
 Ranulph Hudston; Eugene Jousse; John MacRae; Robert Matheson;  
 Alan Mills; Earl Pennington; Percy Rodriguez; Kay Ryan; Mary  
 Savidge; Jill Showell; Frederick Smith; Peter Symcox; Jimmy

Tapp; Norman Taviss; Kay Tremblay; John Trenamen; Walter Wakefield; Joan Watts; Rheta Wheatley; Gwyn Williams.

Twenty-Eighth Season : 1957 - 1958

1) Venus Observed - Christopher Fry

20 Nov. 1957 : 4 perfs.

Closse Street Playhouse Direction and Design - Peter Symcox

PERPETUA = Rita Roy DUKE OF ALTAIR = Chris Wiggins

2) Amahl And The Night Visitors - (Opera) Gian-Carlo Menotti

26 Dec. 1957 : 8 perfs.

Closse St. Stage Director - Irving Guttman  
Musical Director - Michel Perrault

3) Major Barbara - G.B.Shaw

7 Jan. 1958 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Donald McGill Settings - Pierre Delanoe

MAJOR BARBARA = Diana Fish EDWARD UNDERSHAFT = Ronald Kinsman

4) The Lass Wi' The Muckle Mou' - Alexander Reid

18 Feb. 1958 : 5 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Donald McGill Settings - Pierre Delanoe

THE LASS = Pat Galloway YOUNG SCOT = Eric Kosky

NOTE : The advertised program was abandoned at this point. The productions which follow were replacements.

5) By The Skin Of Our Teeth - Thornton Wilder (Workshop Production,

8 April 1958 : 5 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy

MRS ANTROBUS = Valda Dalton MR ANTROBUS = Andre d'Hostel

6) Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter? - George Axelrod

27 May 1958 : 5 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy Settings - Griffith Brewer

RITA MARLOWE = Marilyn Gardner MacCAULEY = Terrence Labrosse

The Company

Burt Adkin; Griffith Brewer; Yvon Coutu; Andre d'Hostel; Valda Dalton; Olive de Wilton; Diana Fish; Frank Fontaine; William Robert Fournier; Gaston Gagnon; Pat Galloway; Marilyn Gardner; John Hempstead; George Kinloch; Ronald Kinsman; Eric Kosky; Terrence Labrosse; Beryl Lowe; Diana MacMillan; Donald McGill; Gay Murray; Claude Richard; Rita Roy; Robert Savoie; Jack Stewart; Phoebe Stewart; Kay Tremblay; Louis Turenne; Walter Wakefield; Tom Watts; Chris Wiggins; Guy Zenaitis.

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Twenty-Ninth Season : 1958 - 19591) Inherit The Wind - Jerome Lawrence & Robert E. Lee

23 Sept. 1958 : 5 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy

BRADY = Gordon Atkinson DRUMMOND = Joe Golland

2) 99 Times Around The Clock - Myron Galloway

7 Oct. 1958 : 5 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy Settings - Griffith Brewer

IRENE CALLAGHAN = Gladys Richards DAVID = Rodney Lefebvre

3) Clérambard - Marcel Aymé

21 Oct. 1958 : 5 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy

LA COMTESSE = Jeannine Beaupré CLERAMBARD = Andre d'Hostel

4) Macbeth - W.Shakespeare

11 Nov. 1958 : 12 perfs. Dec. 6 additional perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy Settings - Arthur Voronka

LADY MACBETH = Diana Fish MACBETH = Henry Ramer

5) Visit To A Small Planet - Gore Vidal

9 Dec. 1958 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Jack Crisp Setting - Griffith Brewer

COMMENTATOR'S WIFE = Gladys Richards KRETON = John Hempstead

6) I Love Electra - (Musical) Bill Solly

6 Jan. 1959 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy Settings - Arthur Voronka

FANNY O'REILLY = Christine Donaghy BIGGO = John Hempstead

7) Squaring The Circle - Valentine Kataev (Studio Production)

27 Jan. 1959 : 5 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Robert Verniks

TANYA = Sandra Matthew VASYA = Geoffrey Cosgrove

8) Arms And The Man - G.B.Shaw

10 Feb. 1959 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy Settings - Griffith Brewer

RAINA = Carol Kirby BLUNTSCHLI = John Codner

9) You Can't Take It With You - G.Kaufman & M.Hart

24 Feb. 1959 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Jack Crisp Setting - Griffith Brewer

PENNY SYCAMORE = Gladys Richards THE FIANCE = Bill White

10) Speaking Of Murder : Audrey & William Roos

7 April 1959 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy      Setting - Earl Preston

MRS ASHTON = Beryl Baxter      CHARLES ASHTON = Henry Ramer

The Company

Miriam Asher; Gordon Atkinson; Susan Barnett; Beryl Baxter;  
 Jeannine Beaupre; Robert Boulanger; Dorothy Boyanner; Griffith  
 Brewer; John Codner; Vernis Christie; Carlene Cooper; Geoffrey  
 Cosgrove; Maud d'Arcy; Andre d'Hostel; Dorothy Danford; Randy  
 Davis; Christine Donaghy; Eric Donkin; Basil Donn; Jean Doyon;  
 Mignon Elkins; Shalom Erdleman; Johanne Fairchild; Diana Fish;  
 Joe Golland; Ray Hahn; Shirley Harrison; Wilfred Hastings;  
 Judy Hayes; Paul Hecht; John Hempstead; Eunice Hinch; Richard  
 Hinch; Henry Hovenkamp; Mary Lacey Kelly; Carol Kirby; Victor  
 Knight; Terry Labrosse; Rodney Lefebvre; Beryl Lowe; Simone  
 Lowe; Don MacIntyre; Jean MacRae; Sandra Matthew; Sadie  
 Moffat; Rose Comete Morin; Julia Murphy; Jean-Roger Periard;  
 Hans Peter; Douglas Peterson; David Rabou; Henry Ramer; Gladys  
 Richards; Solange Robert; Rita Roy; Sheila Scott; Veronica  
 Snell; Jacques Thibault; Kietrah Thomas; Anthony Tremblay; Kay  
 Tremblay; Louis Turenne; Robert Verniks; Walter Wakefield;  
 Joan Watts; Bill White; Chris Wiggins.

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Thirtieth Season : 1959 - 1960

1) The Iron Harp - Joseph O'Connor

22 Sept. 1959 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Jean de Savoye Setting - Keith Coulter  
O'RIORDAN = Leo Ciceri BLACK AND TAN = Eric Kosky

2) Misalliance - G.B.Shaw

13 Oct. 1959 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Donald McGill Setting - Earl Preston  
MRS TARLETON = Maud Whitmore JOHN TARLETON = Lew Davidson

3) Dead On Nine - Jack Popplewell

3 Nov. 1959 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Jack Crisp Setting - Keith Coulter  
ESMERELDA = Beryl Baxter ROBERT LEIGH = Ed McGibbon

4) Simon And Laura - Alan Melville

24 Nov. 1959 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Julia Murphy  
LAURA = Jane Hilary SIMON = Donald Ewer

5) Hamlet - W.Shakespeare

5 Jan. 1960 : 15 perfs. plus Student matinees

Closse St. Dir. Roger Racine Settings - Earl Preston  
GERTRUDE = Beryl Baxter HAMLET = Leo Ciceri

6) The Great Sebastians - H.Lindsay & R.Crouse

9 Feb. 1960 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Jack Crisp Setting - Earl Preston  
ESSIE SEBASTIAN = Kay Tremblay RUDI = Chris Wiggins

7) The Importance Of Being Earnest - Oscar Wilde

8 March 1960 : 15 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Roeberta Beatty Settings - Earl Preston  
 LADY BRACKNELL = Eleanor Stuart JOHN WORTHINGTON = Leo Ciceri

8) The Corn Is Green - Emyln Williams

3 May 1960 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Tom Owen

MISS MOFFAT = Eleanor Stuart MORGAN EVANS = William Armstrong

The Company

George Alexander; William Armstrong; Gordon Atkinson; Beryl  
 Baxter; Violet Bussey; Michael Carver; John Cherer; Leo  
 Ciceri; John Codner; Andre d'Hostel; Ruth Dahan; Lew Davidson;  
 Allan Doby; Eric Donkin; Mignon Elkins; Donald Ewer; Felix  
 Fitzgerald; Marilyn Gardner; Anne Garrard; Alan Goldbloom;  
 Suzanne Grossmann; Wilfred Hastings; Jane Hilary; Richard  
 Hogan; Henry Hovenkamp; Ronald Kinsman; Eric Kosky; Martin  
 Lewis; Ed McGibbon; Donald McGill; Tom Owen; Douglas  
 Peterson; Eleanor Stuart; Liam Sweeney; Kay Tremblay; Louis  
 Turenne; Robert Vernik; Maud Whitmore; Chris Wiggins; Barbara  
 Wilson.

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Thirty-First Season : 1960 - 1961

1) The Bad Seed - Maxwell Anderson

20 Sept. 1960 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Roeberta Beatty Setting - Earl Preston

RHODA = Grace McNair THE MOTHER = Ann Morrish

2) The Public Prosecutor - Fritz Hochwalder

11 Oct. 1960 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Powys Thomas with Jean Gascon. Set - E. Preston  
 THERESA TALLIEN = Barbara Wilson Dyer  
 ANTON FOUQUIER-TINVILLE = Powys Thomas

3) The Fifth Season - Sylvia Regan

1 Nov. 1960 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Jack Crisp      Setting - Earl Preston  
 MRS PINCUS = Miriam Asher      MAX PINCUS = Joseph Golland

4) Studio Production : 11 Dec. 1960 : 1 perf.

- The Lesson - E. Ionesco  
 Sarah Moffat/Eric Donkin

- The Chairs - E. Ionesco  
 11 Dec. 1960 : 1 perf.

Dir. Charles Rittenhouse (1st. MRT role May 1933)

Major Production : 3 Jan. 1961 : 5 perfs.

- The Lesson and The Chairs

5) Roar Like A Dove - Lesley Storm

17 Jan. 1961 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Jack Crisp      Setting - Earl Preston  
 LADY DUNGAVEL = Beryl Baxter      LORD DUNGAVEL = Leo Ciceri

6) Henry IV - Luigi Pirandello

21 Feb. 1961 : 10 perfs.

Closse St. Dir. Leo Ciceri with Charles Rittenhouse  
 Settings - Earl Preston

THE MARCHESA = Kay Tremblay      HENRY IV = Leo Ciceri

The Company

Burt Adkins; George Alexander; Miriam Asher; Ellen Balkan;  
Beryl Baxter; Joan Blackman; George Bloomfield; Griffith  
Brewer; John Brown; Kenneth Culley; Dorothy Danford; Eric  
Donkin; Barbara Wilson Dyer; James Emond; Johanne Fairchild;  
Jack Foster; Henry Gamer; Joseph Golland; Wilfred Hastings;  
Paul Hecht; Richard Hinch; Tristan Karman; Gwyneth Mackenzie;  
Jane Mallet; Grace McNair; Don McSween; Sarah Moffat; Ann  
Morrish; Etta Murphy; Tom Owen; Jean-Louis Paris; Robert  
Paterson; David Raboy; Powys Thomas; Kay Tremblay; Barbara  
Ware; Maud Whitmore.

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NOTE: Henry Gamer and Henry Ramer, while appearing to be  
misprints, are in fact different actors. With the idea  
of avoiding confusion Henry Ramer at times used "Ramer  
Henry" as a stage name.

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