



PERFORMING *for* CANADIANS

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2013



CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS DU CANADA



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“THE OPENING OF THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE IS AN
EXCITING EVENT FOR OTTAWA AND FOR CANADA ...
ITS POSSIBILITIES ARE UNLIMITED.”

Pierre Elliott Trudeau



Music Director Pinchas Zukerman conducts the NAC Orchestra and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra in a joint concert at the Winspear Centre during the 2005 Alberta-Saskatchewan Tour. *Photo: Fred Cattroll.*

OPENING NIGHT



G. Hamilton Southam
NAC Director General 1967-1977
Photo: Yousuf Karsh.

It was an extraordinarily bold vision in 1969—to create a national performing arts centre to celebrate the art and the artists of a diverse, complex and bilingual nation.


Conceived by Hamilton Southam and brought to life through an Act of Parliament, the National Arts Centre opened its first season with the unexpected.

Instead of a “traditional” program, it presented a highly original, experimental dance work by Roland Petit entitled *Kraanerg*, performed by the National Ballet of Canada with the contemporary music of Greek composer Iannis Xenakis. *The New York Times* described it as “an act of wonderful daring”, and hailed the music as one of the most important ballet scores of the 20th century.

Over much of its history, the NAC brought to life the boldness of its founding vision, but by the early 1990s, we had begun to drift away from being a national force in the performing arts. As we acknowledged in our 2001 Strategic Plan, “We became complacent. We stopped being a centre for creativity. The NAC had lost its sense of purpose ... and its sense of direction.” These were harsh words ... but the diagnosis was accurate and necessary to spur us to action.

We identified four major strategic goals that we would pursue to restore the NAC as Canada’s pre-eminent showcase for the performing arts. The first, a renewed focus on artistic expansion and innovation, was designed to put the emphasis ... and the excitement ... back on our stages. We proposed to return to in-house production, to commission and produce more new Canadian works, and to make a strong commitment to being a leader in each of the performing arts disciplines—Music, English and French Theatre, and Dance.

The second goal was to place a far greater emphasis on the NAC’s national role—by co-producing with arts organizations from coast to coast and by encouraging and supporting the best Canadian artists, giving them national and international exposure. We vowed to make a difference in the performing arts throughout Canada—by bringing NAC performances to Canadians wherever they lived, and by creating national showcases that celebrated Canadian artists of all disciplines.



We identified four major strategic goals that we would pursue to restore the NAC as Canada’s pre-eminent showcase for the performing arts.

A greater commitment to youth and education activities across the country was our third goal, and we identified three broad areas to focus our efforts: artist training, the development of young audiences, and providing classroom support to teachers and students.

Our fourth and final goal was to increase our earned revenue dramatically to fund our artistic expansion and educational activities on a national scale. This meant we would have to become far more entrepreneurial and far more self-reliant. Earned revenue, including fundraising through the establishment of the National Arts Centre Foundation, would become a major new source of revenue growth over the coming decade.

HOW DID WE DO?

- 6 Our focus over the past six seasons has been on developing programs—both on and off the stage—that celebrate and encourage the very best artistic talent our country has to offer.

To bring artistic excellence to life on our stages and across Canada, the NAC recruited an artistic leadership team that is among the very best in North America. Pinchas Zukerman, Marti Maraden, Denis Marleau, Peter Hinton, Wajdi Mouawad, Cathy Levy, Michel Dozois and Heather Moore have been the creative voices charged with making the NAC's mission a reality.

From premieres of new Canadian work such as *The Penelopiad*, to exclusive engagements of European companies such as the Kirov Ballet and Pina Bausch Tanztheater Wuppertal; from the internationally acclaimed theatrical productions by Wajdi Mouawad to the power and passion of one of Canada's greatest orchestras, the NAC put excellence back on its stages.

Co-productions with theatres and dance companies across Canada were expanded to help support artistic development. The NAC's partnerships with The Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, B.C.'s Caravan Farm Theatre, Montreal's La La La Human Steps, Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, Vancouver's Kidd Pivot, the Manitoba Theatre Centre in Winnipeg, Ottawa's Théâtre la Catapulte, and the Neptune Theatre in Halifax ... and many others ... fostered artistic exchanges between different parts of the country.

The NAC's development and co-production of Marie Clement's *Copper Thunderbird*, which premiered at the NAC Theatre in 2007, signalled a major commitment by our English Theatre Artistic Director Peter Hinton to bring Aboriginal voices and stories to our stages on an annual basis. We also created unique professional development opportunities for Aboriginal artists—actors, directors, playwrights and craftspeople—as part of this commitment.

In 2003, we launched a unique series of national festivals to celebrate Canadian artists from all regions of the country. The *Atlantic Scene*, *Alberta Scene* and *Quebec Scene* created national and international performance opportunities for artists that continue to pay dividends in terms of visibility and bookings.

The National Arts Centre Orchestra returned to annual touring, bringing Canada's Orchestra to communities across the country as well as providing unique educational offerings while on tour. We also reached out to young Canadians, their parents and teachers with our award-winning website *ArtsAlive.ca*.

Situated in the heart of the national capital, the NAC is fortunate to work with talented artists from both Ottawa and Gatineau. The NAC's Fourth Stage was created to be a vibrant hub for local artists and we have strengthened our relationships with local arts organizations and festivals.



Penny Downie in the NAC/Royal Shakespeare Company co-production of Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*.
Photo: Ellie Kurtz.

Driven by his passion for teaching the next generation of musicians, Pinchas Zukerman was the catalyst for the creation of the NAC Summer Music Institute—celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2008. The Institute offers international-calibre teaching to young musicians, composers and conductors from around the world, and through the generosity of donors and sponsors, provides Canadian students in the Young Artist Programme, Conductors Programme and Composers Programme with free tuition.

The Institute for Orchestral Studies, created in 2006, is the next step in young artist training. The goals of the Institute are to provide a real-world workplace experience for exceptionally talented students at a post-secondary or graduate level and to help prepare young musicians entering orchestral careers.

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We created one of the most extensive arts education programmes in Canada, and over the past six years, invested more than \$20 million in programmes for young artists, for the development of young audiences and for classroom resources to support teachers and students. Since we made the commitment in 2001 to make arts education a strategic goal, hundreds of thousands of young people across the country have been reached through our education programmes.

To restore the National Arts Centre as Canada's pre-eminent showcase for the performing arts, we dramatically increased the NAC's earned revenues, primarily through the creation of the National Arts Centre Foundation, which guided the NAC from about \$1 million in annual fundraising to more than \$8.3 million in 2006–2007.



The path we chose in 2001 has served the NAC well, putting us back on course to recapture the promise of both our founders' vision ... and our parliamentary mandate. We've taken exciting steps forward in some areas, and advanced steadily in others. But we are still very much a work in progress ... and we have a great deal still to do. To develop and support the performing arts in Canada ... now and in the future ... we must deepen relationships with artistic and education partners, nurture new ones and more consistently have an impact in the arts across Canada.

LEFT: The Banff Centre's production of *Filumena*, co-commissioned and originally co-produced by The Banff Centre and Calgary Opera, opens the *Alberta Scene*. Photo: Don Lee, The Banff Centre.

BELOW: Institute for Orchestral Studies participant Won Hee Lee from Ottawa. Photo: Fred Cattroll.



TAKING NOTE

- 10 To help us imagine and plan for the next five years, we undertook extensive consultations with artists, arts organizations, arts educators and public funders from across Canada. In 44 meetings across the country in late 2007 and early 2008, we heard that the privilege of a parliamentary mandate means that we owe a special obligation to Canadian artists and arts organizations ... and to Canadian audiences.

While each region has its own unique artistic voice, there were many common themes.

First and foremost, we must ensure that the NAC brand stands for excellence. From coast to coast, we heard that artists value performing at the NAC and partnering with us to create great work.

We were reminded that the National Arts Centre needs to be a centre for performance, creation and learning, and that not all of our work needs to take place within the six walls of our building.



*We must be a champion for
existing Canadian work and a
catalyst for new Canadian work ...
and play a major role in getting
work seen and heard across the
country and around the world.*



Théâtre populaire d'Acadie presents *Le Filet* as part of the *Festival Zones Théâtrales*. Photo: Maurice Arsenault.

(left to right) Bertrand Dugas, Alex Gravel and Éric Butler

We must be a champion for existing Canadian work and a catalyst for new Canadian work ... and play a major role in getting work seen and heard across the country and around the world.

We must work in partnership with arts organizations across the country so that our initiatives complement, rather than duplicate, existing activities. The *Scene* festivals received special mention during the consultations as a model for partnership that respects and reflects the interests and needs of a given artistic community.

We heard clearly that we must showcase the widest possible range of artistic voices from every part of Canada, and that we should broaden our programming choices.

We should continue to produce the *Scene* festivals and partner in the *Magnetic North Theatre Festival*, *Festival Zones Théâtrales* and the *Canada Dance Festival*.

We must remain a strong champion of French-language culture, working with artists from both inside and outside Quebec. And we must ensure that the increasingly multicultural make-up of our country is reflected in our programmes and on our stages.

In many parts of the country, we heard that arts education in schools is in decline. The NAC was asked to provide support in the delivery of quality arts education ... by providing resources and programmes for teachers, students and classrooms.


We heard that the NAC must work in partnership with arts organizations across the country to leverage greater private sector support for the arts ... and that together we can increase the level and profile of giving to the arts.

Advocacy was another strong theme. The NAC should be using its unique position to be an advocate for the arts and arts education with opinion leaders, the media and the general public ... and continue to promote dialogue among artists, arts organizations and arts educators.

We were reminded that the National Capital Region is Canada's fourth largest urban centre ... and that local artists and arts organizations are as interested in working with us as those from other regions. While they did not expect special treatment, they deserved no less than equal consideration. And we heard very clearly that the NAC's Fourth Stage has become an integral part of the performing arts scene in Ottawa-Gatineau.

- 12 Finally, we learned that we must do a better job communicating our vision, priorities and programmes if we are truly to fulfill our national mandate to promote and further the performing arts in Canada.

STRATEGIC GOALS



*The National Arts Centre will
be a vibrant national centre
for performance, creation
and learning.*

The experience of the last six years and the invaluable feedback from our national consultations confirmed that the four goals we established in 2001 are still relevant: Artistic excellence, national focus, youth and education, and increasing earned revenues will remain pillars of our future. And we will add a fifth: putting our audiences at the centre of what that we do.

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Our plan includes the continuation of many of our successful programmes, and the addition of a number of bold new initiatives—initiatives that will require new sources of both public and private funding if we are to become a vibrant national centre for performance, creation and learning.

{ 1 } Artistic Excellence


Creating, producing and performing great work

In 2007, Canada's greatest living author, one of the world's leading theatre companies and the National Arts Centre collaborated on the world premiere of Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, a subversive retelling of the story of Homer's *Odyssey*. Critics from the UK and Canada hailed the work as a powerful take on a classic myth, reimagined for a 21st century audience. *CBC Television* called the Royal Shakespeare Company/NAC co-production one of the most important theatrical events in Canada in the past 25 years.

14 Peter Hinton's achievement with *The Penelopiad* is one of many success stories.

Under the leadership of Pinchas Zukerman, the NAC Orchestra has drawn accolades at home and abroad, and has introduced a plan for the creation and promotion of new Canadian orchestral music, including the engagement of three prominent Canadian composers as artists in residence.

Le Moine noir, directed by French Theatre's Denis Marleau, had its world premiere as part of the prestigious *Lille* festival, and later opened in Canada at the NAC before touring Belgium, France, Switzerland and Quebec. And French Theatre broke new ground with its decision to co-produce and present a circus—Montreal's renowned *les 7 doigts de la main*—in its main stage Theatre season.



The goal of artistic excellence must extend, however, beyond our stages. We must be a catalyst for nurturing and showcasing great work in communities all across Canada.



Montreal's *les 7 doigts de la main* in *Loft*. Photo: Christian Tremblay.

Cathy Levy and NAC Dance brought the very best of Canada and the world to our stages, including the exclusive North American engagement of the world renowned Pina Bausch Tanztheater Wuppertal in 2007, the long-awaited return of the Kirov Ballet, and premieres by celebrated Canadian choreographers such as Édouard Lock and Crystal Pite.

The goal of artistic excellence must extend, however, beyond our stages. We must be a catalyst for nurturing and showcasing great work in communities all across Canada. We will co-produce with innovative local and national organizations, and identify and train new creators, artists and directors. We will encourage the craftspeople who support the performances, the professionals who manage arts organizations ... and the producers, sponsors and donors who are critical for turning ideas into art.

The NAC is Canada's only bilingual, multidisciplinary producing and performing arts organization, and we are one of a handful of organizations that has a larger artistic responsibility in this country—both for setting high artistic standards and for supporting a wide range of artistic expression throughout this vast nation.

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Priorities

The NAC's role over the coming five years is to continue to foster artistic excellence in the performing arts.

We start on our own stages. Our goal, and the goal of each member of our Artistic Leadership team, is to create, produce and perform first-class work.

We will make a stronger commitment to the creation of new Canadian work in all disciplines.

We will develop artist residencies which will act as incubators for both established and emerging artists.

The National Arts Centre Orchestra will continue its campaign to retain and recruit exceptional musicians and more aggressively court relationships with the best visiting conductors to further develop the Orchestra's artistic standards.

The Orchestra will introduce an annual residency—*Portrait of an Artist*—to explore in greater depth the work of a single Canadian performer and will programme major retrospectives of the work of Canadian composers, in line with the 2008 tribute to Canadian composing legend R. Murray Schafer.

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The NAC will develop unique programming and presentations to help our audience deepen their understanding and their relationship with orchestral music—particularly 20th century repertoire.

NAC English Theatre will establish a National Company of artists, including a mentored *Young Company* of recent theatre school graduates—to create major new productions and professional residencies, and to tour in small and medium-sized communities across Canada.

Wajdi Mouawad's vision for French Theatre begins with young audiences. French Theatre will partner with national arts and education institutions such as the National Gallery of Canada to create unique, multidisciplinary performances and workshops for children and youth. A new partnership program with international theatre artists will bring foreign-language work

Choreographer Crystal Pite's much-acclaimed Vancouver-based company Kidd Pivot performs *Lost Action*. Photo: Chris Randle.



to the French Theatre main stage. And Wajdi will continue his tradition of creating “sets” or “series” of works with the production of Sophocles’ seven tragedies.

NAC Dance will deepen its commitment to the development, creation and presentation of new work—work by established and emerging Canadian and international choreographers.

The NAC will partner with major organizations such as The Banff Centre, Place des Arts, Danse Danse and the *Canada Dance Festival* to develop unique new dance projects across the country.

We will create and present more multidisciplinary work as artistic boundaries become more fluid, as new media is added to the artistic repertoire, and as creative possibilities are enhanced.

We will continue to present Canada’s finest performing arts companies—from our major ballet companies and orchestras to ground-breaking contemporary dance and theatre companies—and through *NAC Presents*, we will also showcase gifted Canadian performers and exciting performances from the world of entertainment to complement our core programming.

{ 2 } Going National

Expanding our national role

Michelle Thrush, Artistic Director of Crazy Horse Theatre—Calgary's professional Aboriginal theatre company—had never worked with the NAC before being part of the line-up for the National Arts Centre's *Alberta Scene* festival in 2005. *Time Stands Still*, directed by Thrush, played to packed houses at the NAC's Fourth Stage as one of more than 100 events during the *Scene*.

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"I think the *Alberta Scene* really elevated us from thinking of ourselves as a small theatre company in Calgary, to wanting to dream higher, I guess because the *Scene* had such a prestigious quality about it. We just felt so included and supported. We were treated with such respect by everybody at the NAC."

Michelle Thrush's experience at the NAC is one reason why our national role has never been more important.

Another good example of what a national centre for the arts can and should be doing is *Incendies*, Wajdi Mouawad's poetic examination of family and destiny. The NAC presented the original French-language version during its French Theatre season, commissioned its translation ... and then co-produced it with Toronto's Tarragon Theatre for English-language audiences. The net result—a remarkable theatrical work available in both French and English ... and the winner of *Dora* awards for best direction and best production.

Over the next five years, the NAC will build on our recent successes with the goal of becoming a “national” performing arts centre that lives up to its name. We believe that a national centre for the performing arts is one that sets high artistic standards, includes arts education as a core priority, works in partnership with emerging and established artists, arts organizations and educators from all across the country, and one that is committed to the creation and nurturing of new Canadian works. And our activities should complement, rather than duplicate, those being carried out by arts organizations across the country.

Priorities

To help us make a difference in the performing arts across Canada, we will maintain a number of our existing programmes, but we will modify, expand and adapt a number of others.

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We will continue to produce the *Scene* festivals, which give voice and prominence to hundreds of artists from each region of the country on a national stage. Plans are under way for the *BC Scene* in 2009 and the *Prairie Scene* in 2011 ... and other regions will be showcased in the future.

Touring, long a NAC Orchestra hallmark for connecting directly with Canadians, will play an expanded role in the NAC’s national focus. The National Arts Centre Orchestra will continue to offer concerts and educational experiences in partnership with local orchestras and schools ... with a special emphasis on performing great music in underserved communities.

Up to 20 times per year, we will stream NAC Orchestra concerts on the internet, and archive them for later listening to allow the Orchestra to reach Canadians anywhere, for free.

NAC Dance will play a key role in touring—by commissioning and co-producing, by providing anchor dates for Canadian and international companies, and by working with the Canada Council and presenters at home and abroad to facilitate additional bookings.

The English Theatre *Young Company* will have a mandate to tour up to six months per year. The *Young Company* will bring exceptional theatrical performances as well as educational opportunities to small and medium-sized communities such as Medicine Hat, Swift Current, Prince Rupert, Grand Falls and Truro—communities that have limited opportunities to see highly skilled theatre artists.

Quebec has a strong tradition of touring theatrical work to mid-sized centres across the province, and NAC French Theatre will begin to have a regular presence on this Quebec touring circuit.

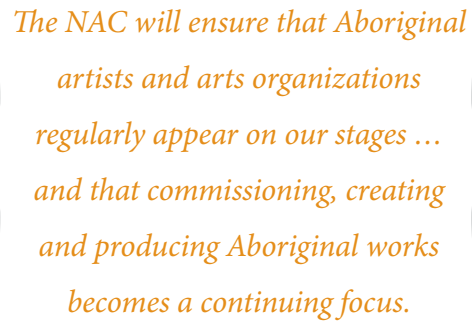
Our programmes will showcase French Canadian voices from both inside and outside Quebec, and Canada's francophone artists will continue to have a place of pride at the NAC. French Theatre will introduce three important new initiatives for francophone artists outside Quebec: playwright residencies, co-productions with regional theatre companies for inclusion during the NAC season, and commissions of new works by playwrights or performing artists, to be created at the NAC.

A truly national arts centre should reflect the cultural diversity of the country. The NAC will, over the coming five years, seek to develop new ties and strengthen existing relationships with artists of diverse backgrounds, sharing their stories and work with all Canadians.



TOP: Students participate in the NAC Orchestra Music and Education tour of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Photo: Fred Cattroll.

BOTTOM: Marie Clements, playwright, *Copper Thunderbird*—a co-production of the National Arts Centre English Theatre and Vancouver's urban ink productions, developed with assistance from Playwrights' Workshop Montreal and The Banff Centre. Photo: Laird Mackintosh.



The NAC will ensure that Aboriginal artists and arts organizations regularly appear on our stages ... and that commissioning, creating and producing Aboriginal works becomes a continuing focus.

The NAC will ensure that Aboriginal artists and arts organizations regularly appear on our stages ... and that commissioning, creating and producing Aboriginal works becomes a continuing focus. With the support of Canadian private sector partners, we will build an Aboriginal Talent Development Fund to nurture the next generation of great artists.

The NAC Music Alive Program, which has brought teaching musicians and music resources to classrooms in 300 mostly rural schools in Alberta and Saskatchewan, will be introduced to other underserved parts of the country over the next five years. We will work collaboratively with local orchestras and local boards of education to address this significant gap in arts education.

We will continue to co-produce with theatre companies across the country, sharing financial and creative risks ... helping to tell more Canadian stories to more Canadians.

We will host and be actively involved in national events and celebrations such as the *Magnetic North Theatre Festival*, the *Canada Dance Festival*, *Festival Zones Théâtrales*, *MusicFest Canada*, *Unisong*, the *Canadian Improv Games*, *Music Monday* and the *Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Gala*.

We will use our ongoing relationships with federal, provincial and municipal leaders to bring greater attention to the vital role arts and culture play in Canadian life.

We will engage Canadians across the country through live webcasts and podcasts, and we will continue to innovate in distance learning and outreach programmes that provide telementoring to young artists, students and teachers, no matter where they live.

While Canada is understandably proud of the renowned Shaw and Stratford summer theatre festivals, there is no comparable international music festival to showcase the great musical talent our country has to offer. In partnership with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO), we are working on the development of a major summer music festival—a festival in the Niagara region that will rival established American festivals such as Tanglewood and Ravinia. It will feature the best in classical and contemporary music, with the TSO and the National Arts Centre Orchestra in residence for three weeks each. Offering concerts, workshops and educational programmes, it will become a vibrant, world-class music centre.

And finally, we will implement a clear and unified communications strategy that shares our vision with artists, arts organizations, educators, donors and other supporters ... one that tells the story of the meaningful role that the arts play in the lives of Canadians.

{ 3 } The Art of Learning

Focusing on Youth and Education

We have heard from educators across the country of the important role the NAC can play in training and mentoring artists, in developing audiences and in creating and providing teacher resource materials.

In the summer of 2007, twenty-five year-old violist Roxi Dykstra from Prince George, British Columbia took part in the NAC Summer Music Institute (SMI), a rigorous training programme for brilliant young artists from around the world. Roxi usually has a grueling nine-hour weekly commute to Vancouver for her musical training, so the opportunity to live in residence at the University of Ottawa with other gifted students and to be taught by an internationally renowned faculty at the SMI was a thrill. "I have never felt more connected to the musical heartbeat of our country and continent," she said, "and I want you to know that what I take from this opportunity will also be given back to the communities I am from."

Roxi's story is just one example of how young people are at the heart of the National Arts Centre. During the past six years, more than 600,000 young people have been part of the education efforts of the NAC.

We have heard from educators across the country of the important role the NAC can play in training and mentoring artists, in developing audiences and in creating and providing teacher resource materials.

Priorities

The NAC will again make arts education a key pillar of our strategic vision. Until now, more of our efforts have been invested in Music education ... but over the course of the next five years, we will make arts education a core activity for Theatre and Dance as well.

In Dance, we will expand our masterclasses with renowned visiting guest artists and offer residencies for some of Canada's best choreographers and for the NAC's own Associate Dance Artists.

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The Ark, an exciting new initiative for English Theatre that is equal parts theatrical workshop, historical masterclass and cultural think tank, is another way in which we have advanced training for established professionals and young artists. We will expand *The Ark* so that more performing arts students get an opportunity to collaborate with theatre professionals as a form of "hands-on" learning and creation.

French Theatre will continue its celebrated *Les Laboratoires du Théâtre français*—an annual 10-day creative research and development masterclass, in which internationally recognized guest artists share their knowledge and practice with professional theatre artists from across Canada.

The NAC Orchestra will offer year-round artist training to augment its successful Summer Music Institute and Institute for Orchestral Studies.





LEFT: Summer Music Institute participant Jan Lisiecki performs at the NAC Fall Gala. Photo: Mike Ridewood.

ABOVE: Jazz pianist Jason Moran telementors McGill University music student Daniel Reynolds during a *Manhattan on the Rideau* masterclass. Photo: Michel Dozois.

Our wide-ranging education activities are a signature of NAC Orchestra tours. We will continue to work with local partners to deliver masterclasses, student matinees, open rehearsals and music teaching resources of the highest professional standards. Arts education for young Aboriginal people will be a particular priority of these tours.

We will continue to produce comprehensive study guides that support our offerings in Music, Theatre and Dance, and we will include an education component for all of our major artistic projects.

The NAC will continue to develop its education and outreach website, *ArtsAlive.ca*, in order to deliver performing arts curriculum resources for teachers and to intrigue and inspire students. This unique website, which already welcomes over 6,500 visitors per day, will continue to be enhanced with engaging and informative content in Music, Theatre and Dance as well as virtual exhibits from the NAC archives and an audio library spanning the NAC Orchestra's 40-year history.

The NAC will take a leadership role in developing network-enabled education and outreach programmes through its *Hexagon* initiative. This next-generation video-conference technology makes possible the telementoring of young artists, students and professionals by our Artistic Directors such as Pinchas Zukerman, NAC Orchestra musicians, and theatre and dance professionals.

Hexagon will explore this high-fidelity interactive medium to produce teaching sessions, auditions, lectures and Q&A sessions in support of all NAC education and outreach initiatives.

During our consultations, Teacher Development was identified as a significant need throughout Canada. There is a shortage of teachers qualified to teach the arts in our schools. The NAC will work in partnership with arts and education organizations across the country to provide educators with some of the tools to help them use the arts in the classroom more effectively.

{ 4 } Earning Our Way

Increasing our earned revenues

In the 2001 Strategic Plan, the NAC made a considered decision to finance much of its artistic and education expansion on a national basis through a dramatic increase in earned revenues from the following areas: donor support and fundraising (through the NAC Foundation), ticket sales, hall rentals, commercial parking fees, restaurants and catering revenues, and other income.

From 1999–2000 to 2006–2007, the NAC's annual earned revenue grew from \$24.4 million to \$32.6 million, an increase of \$8.2 million. More than 60 per cent of this growth came from donors and sponsors; another \$1.3 million in net revenues began to flow to our artistic activities every year because of the improved management of our commercial parking lot operations.

The focus on fundraising, in particular, was a radical strategic shift for the NAC, since it was almost unheard of for a federal cultural organization. Today, the NAC raises more money through annual fundraising than any other federal cultural agency.

The funds raised by the NAC Foundation across the country support a wide range of artistic projects, including the National Youth and Education Trust. Created by the NAC Foundation in 2001, the Trust supports the artistic development of young Canadians through educational resources, professional training, mentoring programmes and young audience performances.

It is important to remember, however, that the National Arts Centre is a not-for-profit arts centre ... not a commercial venture. This means that while we are very concerned about operating in a business-like way (the NAC has balanced its budget for eight of the past nine seasons), we cannot do so at the expense of the exceptional Music, Theatre and Dance which is our lifeblood. In other words, while we are delighted to play host to Broadway rentals like *Wicked* that may generate strong box office receipts, this type of commercial fare will always play a secondary role to the core mandate of the NAC.

Priorities

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To finance its ambitious plans for the next five years, the NAC will make an ongoing commitment to increase its earned revenue, this time from \$32.6 million in 2006–2007 to more than \$42 million in 2012–2013—an increase of almost 30 per cent.

The NAC Foundation will once again play a major role in this increase. Over the next five years, the NAC will identify key fundraising priorities, develop business cases for support, test these with the donor community and launch a major national fundraising campaign ... a campaign that will provide significant support for the NAC's artistic and educational initiatives across Canada.

Partnerships and longer-term relationships with donors will drive our strategy, allowing our supporters to align themselves with broad initiatives such as the National Youth and Education Trust and the Aboriginal Talent Development Fund rather than simply with individual series or performances. Philanthropy will become the greatest source of potential new development revenue at the NAC.

To finance its ambitious plans for the next five years, the NAC will make an ongoing commitment to increase its earned revenue.

Over the next five years, we're also committed to expanding significantly the number of tickets we sell through audience development activities, and to increasing our box office revenues. We will build relationships with new and diverse audiences, implement more flexible subscription packages, adopt strategic ticket pricing and invest in a state-of-the-art ticketing system ... all designed to increase paid attendance for NAC Music, Theatre and Dance programmes from about 66 per cent of capacity in 2006–2007 to a goal of 76 per cent by 2012–2013.

We've returned the NAC's Food Services operation to profitability, and our focus going forward will be to improve our net profits—profits that in turn fund the NAC's artistic and education programmes.

The NAC will recruit marketing specialists to help sustain and grow its earned revenue streams. NAC staff will benefit from ongoing professional development and training opportunities designed to help us increase our earned revenues, while also introducing new technologies, systems, and customer relationship practices to keep the NAC competitive with the best performing arts organizations in North America.

{ 5 } Audiences at the Centre

Building relationships with our customers

While a large part of our strategic focus is national, we recognize that we have a special obligation to our loyal subscribers and patrons who sustain the NAC on a daily basis.

The power, beauty and magic of the performing arts lie in their ability to transport people out of their everyday lives. It is a personal experience—intellectual, emotional, even spiritual; and it is a shared experience, where an audience is taken on a journey into new realms of the imagination.

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But these journeys, both personal and collective, have very real starting points—finding out about a performance, buying a ticket, parking a vehicle, having something to eat or drink, consulting a program, finding a seat, adjusting to one's surroundings, waiting for the performance to begin, and finally, the suspension of reality as life becomes the stage.

A ticket to a Broadway production at the NAC might lead to an evening with Peter Hinton's jazz noir musical *The Wrong Son*, which inspires a subscription to the English Theatre season and a donation to the NAC Talent Trust; a college graduation in Southam Hall might lead to a daughter's wedding reception catered by renowned NAC chefs. A download of a NAC Orchestra podcast, a grandchild's first orchestra concert with Boris Brott and a planned gift to the NAC Foundation ... these are all touch points for more than 1.1 million NAC patrons and customers each year.



The NAC Orchestra in Southam Hall. Photo: Fred Cattroll.

All of these experiences are essential for creating the mood—from the smile on the face of the person selling tickets and the temperature in the theatre ... to the ambience at our signature restaurant Le Café ... and the availability and convenience of parking. If the magic does not happen on the “real-life” side of the curtain, there is less chance that the artists on stage will be able to break through the imaginary barrier between performers and audiences to produce memorable experiences.

Our Strategic Plan of 2001 has led to many achievements on the artistic, national and education fronts, and we have greatly increased our earned revenues to support these achievements. But the NAC still has many business practices and systems that date back, regrettably, to its earliest days.

The NAC must bring its customer service and technology to the highest industry standards if it is to attract, nurture, retain and reward its patrons and donors. At a time when a hotel reservation clerk knows your room, meal and leisure preferences with great precision, provides instant billing ... and rewards your loyalty with upgrades; when your online bookstore sends you personalized reminders of upcoming new releases by your favourite authors; when busy schedules call for no-hassle last-minute purchases or cancellations—the NAC must develop the tools, training and practices that today's patrons have come to take for granted in their day-to-day lives.

Every business knows the importance of customer retention and customer satisfaction to the bottom line, and artistic organizations should be no exception. The NAC must move quickly to integrate best practices in customer service to meet ... and exceed ... the expectations and needs of our patrons.

Priorities

The NAC will adopt the most current and effective Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technologies and methodologies, and will encourage the organization to become much more focused on the customer experience.

Collaborating with our customers and listening to their needs will make us more creative and flexible, and help us to find new ways to enrich their arts experience.

We will expand our efforts to enhance the performance experience by developing *Know Before You Go* programmes that will provide audiences—including the knowledgeable veteran, the novice ticket buyer and those in between—with information to help them better enjoy what they are seeing on stage. Some of these will include pre-performance talks, podcasts by the artists performing, tips on what to look for on stage and much more.

The NAC will bring our ticket-selling operation in-house to create a fully integrated ticketing/CRM system with its own highly trained staff to help us better serve our patrons.

Managers and staff will be given ongoing training and the necessary tools to provide high-level service to patrons. Customer service will not simply be the role of the Box Office or the ushers—it will start from the top down, with senior management and artistic leaders all joining together to effect a change in our corporate culture.



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STRATEGIC GOALS AT A GLANCE

{ 1 } Artistic Excellence

To foster artistic excellence and innovation in the performing arts disciplines, the NAC will:

- create, produce and perform first-class work
- commission, develop and support the creation of new Canadian work in all disciplines
- establish an English Theatre National Company of artists, including a *Young Company* that will tour and perform in small and medium-sized communities across Canada
- invite artists to take part in annual NAC residencies
- program major retrospectives of the work of Canada's great composers

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{ 2 } Going National

To become an arts centre that is national in its scope and impact, the NAC will:

- continue to produce the *Scene* festivals (*BC Scene*, 2009; *Prairie Scene*, 2011 ... and other regions will be showcased in the future)
- co-produce with Theatre and Dance companies across Canada
- connect with Canadians through expanded touring activities in all programme disciplines
- engage Canadians where they live through online concerts, live webcasts and podcasts
- make a special commitment to commissioning, creating and producing Aboriginal works, and ensure that the bilingual and multicultural make-up of Canada is reflected on our stages
- extend the NAC Music Alive Program to other parts of the country
- communicate our vision and values more effectively to audiences across the country

{ 3 } The Art of Learning

To make arts education a key pillar of our strategic vision, the NAC will:

- increase education programmes in Theatre and Dance
- offer year-round artist training to augment the Summer Music Institute and Institute for Orchestral Studies
- expand *The Ark*, English Theatre's advanced artist training program
- enhance the reach and impact of our education website *ArtsAlive.ca*
- telementor young artists from across the country with our next-generation *Hexagon* technology
- provide educators with tools to help them use the arts in the classroom more effectively

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{ 4 } Earning Our Way

To finance our ambitious plans for the next five years, the NAC will:

- increase our earned revenue by almost 30 per cent
- launch a major national fundraising campaign
- significantly increase ticket sales through audience development activities
- continue to improve net profits in our commercial parking and food services operations

{ 5 } Audiences at the Centre

To develop deeper relationships with our audiences and patrons, the NAC will:

- reach out to new audiences through viral marketing and social media
- rejuvenate the NAC website
- implement effective customer relationship management technologies
- provide NAC staff with ongoing customer service training and tools
- create adult-learning experiences in all our programme disciplines
- bring our ticket-selling operation in-house

CONCLUSION

What we have set out in this document is the result of an extraordinary collaboration.

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The NAC embarked on an innovative new path with its Strategic Plan *Restoring the Vision*. The NAC Board of Trustees, the Directors of the NAC Foundation, the senior management and the employees of the NAC continue to embrace this new direction as we go forward to 2013. And our national consultations with artists, arts organizations, arts educators and arts funders, have given us a better sense of where we need to strengthen our efforts and what we need to re-evaluate.

We believe that the NAC has much more work to do in order to live up to its unique and privileged position—that we have only scratched the surface of our potential and responsibility.

Our commitment is to make a difference to the arts in Canada. The NAC will support Canada's many artistic voices through risk-sharing, partnerships, funding and collaborations.

The NAC will continue to be a magnet for artists, both promising and pre-eminent, from Canada and around the world, and a partner to scores of other arts organizations across the country. We will showcase and nurture exceptional artistic talent, provide opportunities for young Canadians to explore their creativity through the performing arts and offer different ways for our audiences to experience the art we present on our stages and in venues outside the National Arts Centre.

In 1969, Parliament, the founders of the NAC and the Canadian people entrusted the National Arts Centre with a bold vision and a national mandate. It is a legacy we will sustain, a vision we will expand, and a promise we will deliver.

CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE

53 Elgin Street
PO Box 1534, Station B
Ottawa, ON K1P 5W1
613 947 7000

www.nac-cna.ca

Ce document existe également en français

PERFORMING *for* CANADIANS

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2013



CANADA'S NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS DU CANADA