



The Canada Council | Le Conseil des Arts
for the Arts | du Canada

42nd Annual Report

The Canada Council
for the Arts

1998-
1999

Canada

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"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression..."
(Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

"Writing ... is an act of faith; I believe it's also an act of hope,
the hope that things can be better than they are."
(Margaret Atwood)

Fundamental to the act of creation is the right to freedom of expression.
The Canada Council for the Arts salutes the 50th anniversary of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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The Canada Council for the Arts

Role. The Canada Council for the Arts is a national arm's-length agency created by an Act of Parliament in 1957. Under the terms of the Canada Council Act, the object of the Council is "to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts." To fulfill this mandate, the Council offers a broad range of grants and services to professional Canadian artists and arts organizations in dance, interdisciplinary work and performance art, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts and writing and publishing. The Council administers the Killam Program of scholarly awards and prizes, and offers numerous other prestigious awards. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO and the Public Lending Right Commission also operate under its aegis.

Structure. The Council is headed by a Board consisting of 11 members who are appointed by the government. The Board, chaired by Jean-Louis Roux, meets at least four times a year. It is responsible for all policy and financial decisions as well as other matters which are implemented by a staff headed by a Director, Shirley L. Thomson, who is also appointed by the government.

The Canada Council for the Arts and its staff rely heavily on the advice of artists and arts professionals from all parts of Canada, who are consulted both individually and collectively. The Council also works in close cooperation with federal and provincial cultural agencies and departments.

Funding. The Canada Council for the Arts is funded by and reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage and is called from time to time to appear before parliamentary committees, particularly the House of Commons Standing Committee for Canadian Heritage. Its accounts are audited by the Auditor General of Canada and included in the Council's Annual Report to Parliament.

An annual grant from Parliament is the Canada Council for the Arts' main source of funds, supplemented by income from an Endowment Fund, established by Parliament in 1957. The Council can receive and has over the years received a number of private donations and bequests, the income from which is devoted to the purposes established by the deeds of the gift.

In 1998-99 the Council awarded 5,690 grants to artists and arts organizations and 11,602 payments to authors through the Public Lending Right Commission, totalling \$112 million.

The Canada Council for the Arts
350 Albert Street, P.O. Box 1047
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5V8
1-800-263-5588 or (613) 566-4414
www.canadacouncil.ca

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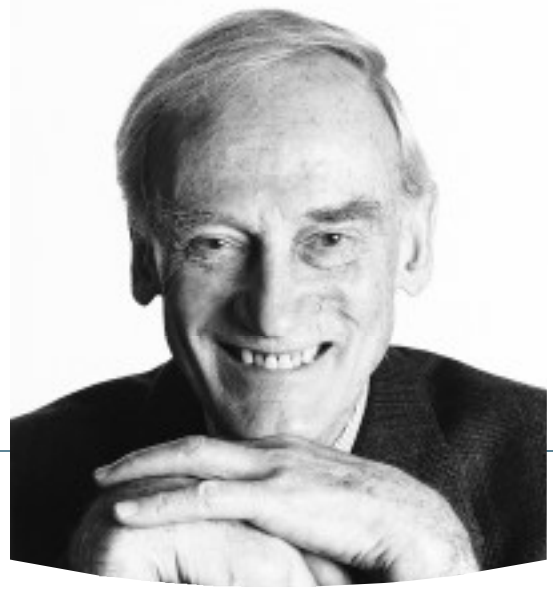
Orféo, a contemporary re-reading of the myth of Orpheus in an interdisciplinary creation by Michel Lemieux Victor Pilon Création, was coproduced by the National Arts Centre French Theatre, the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, and Usine C in Montreal. The work uses a four-dimensional theatrical experience in which the audience is drawn into the story, captivated by the constant transformations of the set and special effects. *Orféo* received a \$30,000 creation grant from the Interdisciplinary Work and Performance Art program. Pictured: Julie Salter (Eurydice) and Rodrigue Proteau (Orféo).

Chairman's Report

Photo: Yves Binet

Chairman's Report

Jean-Louis Roux



I felt happy and honoured when I was appointed the Chairman of the Canada Council for the Arts, a little over a year ago. I also felt somewhat apprehensive, for Canada's artists had very high expectations of me. Fortunately, I can count on the solid backing of the other ten members of the board, the commitment of our dedicated and hard-working staff and the inspired leadership of our director, Shirley Thomson. The synergy of board, staff and management is what makes the Canada Council for the Arts a vigorous and exciting institution.

In 1948, the first paragraph of Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts ..." The global community recognized a citizen's right to free access to culture as being just as important as free access to health or education.

Similarly, the Act for the establishment of the Canada Council stipulates that "The objects of the Council are to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts..." I prefer the English version of the Act for its emphasis on the aspect of enjoyment, as opposed to the term "diffusion" in the French version, for the Council's mission is to make available to the public the works of our artists at their best, so that the population can indeed "enjoy" – derive joy from – those works. This is the key element in the relationship between artists and their audiences.

"To clarify the Council's mission, I like to quote Peter Dwyer, one of the Council's first directors, who said that the Council must be "a thinker, a doer and ... a rascal!..."

To clarify the Council's mission, I like to quote Peter Dwyer, one of the Council's first directors, who said that the Council must be "a thinker, a doer and ... a rascal!..." In other words, the Council must follow the artists' example and make a point of disturbing intellectual complacency if we are to avoid falling into conservative, rigid ways of thinking and doing.

The Council serves every Canadian citizen, even though its primary task is to award grants to artists and arts organizations and create a climate that encourages inspiration and creation. This is how it ensures that all citizens have free access to – and enjoyment of – the arts and culture.

Service, however, does not mean servility. The Council must be a leader, not a follower, of public opinion. In art, creation is the domain of the artists. And for those artists, the Council calls for full freedom of expression - even if this means that the public might occasionally be disturbed by the form that expression takes.

I'm not suggesting that the Council should not be accountable for its action. What I am saying, however, is that its action should be judged in

“But political authority can have no influence upon the artistic choices that are made within the Council. Partisan politics and electoral concerns have no place in the Council’s affairs.”

the universal scheme of things and not by individual, easily targeted examples, and that the Council stands upon two fundamental principles: independence from political authorities (the arm’s -length policy), and the assessment of grant applications by juries of peers.

Through the federal department it comes under, the Council answers to Parliament for the healthy administration of the public funds it is entrusted with. But political authority can have no influence upon the artistic choices that are made within the Council. Partisan politics and electoral concerns have no place in the Council’s affairs.

Moreover, the assessment of grant applications by peer juries ensures the objectivity of choices made within a set of established criteria, the first being professionalism and excellence. Without being flawless, this system has proven its worth and is generally supported by the arts community.

Since my appointment, I have travelled across Canada, from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island, with director Shirley Thomson. I have talked to hundreds of artists to discover their concerns and share their dreams for the future. I have been enormously impressed by the scope and diversity of artistic practices in even the farthest outreaches of our country. Everywhere, our artists demonstrate incredible creative energy, whether they are working in the mainstream or as members of minority groups, as is the case for Acadians and francophones outside Quebec, for Aboriginal Peoples and for culturally diverse artists. There

are only two prevailing situations that they unanimously criticize: the constraints of insufficient funding, and the marginalization and isolation they too often experience. These are two situations that our organization will attempt to rectify.

In this respect, I am delighted that the Canada Council for the Arts is in a much better position than it was two years ago, thanks to the additional funds allocated by Parliament. But we mustn’t rest on our laurels: I will make it my duty to continue to advocate the case of our artists and our organization among the elected representatives of all parties.

We are currently putting the finishing touches on a new plan inspired by previously published Council documents that clearly outlines the importance of the Council and explains the structures, actions and processes it employs to fulfill its mission and continue its judicious administration of public funds.

Among the many issues covered in the plan, there is one that I feel is critical: we have to increase audience attendance at arts events throughout our country. In the long term, it seems obvious that this will be achieved through education. Studies have shown that students who have regular contact with the arts and culture do better in their studies in all disciplines. If there were more arts in education, and more emphasis on education through the arts, we would attain a threefold goal: we would train better students, cultivate artistic vocations, and create larger, better informed arts audiences among future generations of Canadian citizens. Since education comes under provincial jurisdiction, the Council cannot intervene other than by expressing its wishes as eloquently as possible. What it can do, however, is urge arts organizations to focus on this problem and help them find solutions.

A scene from Marie H. Clements' play *Urban Tattoo*, presented at Victoria's Belfry Theatre as part of Festival 99. A dynamic blend of music, dance, poetry and prose, this intense play chronicles the story of a Native woman's journey from the country to the city. In 1999, *Urban Tattoo* was produced by Native Voices at the Theatre of the World Festival at San Diego State University and made its American premiere at the Gene Autry Museum in Los Angeles. Here, a scene from the Belfry Theatre production. Pictured: Marie H. Clements.

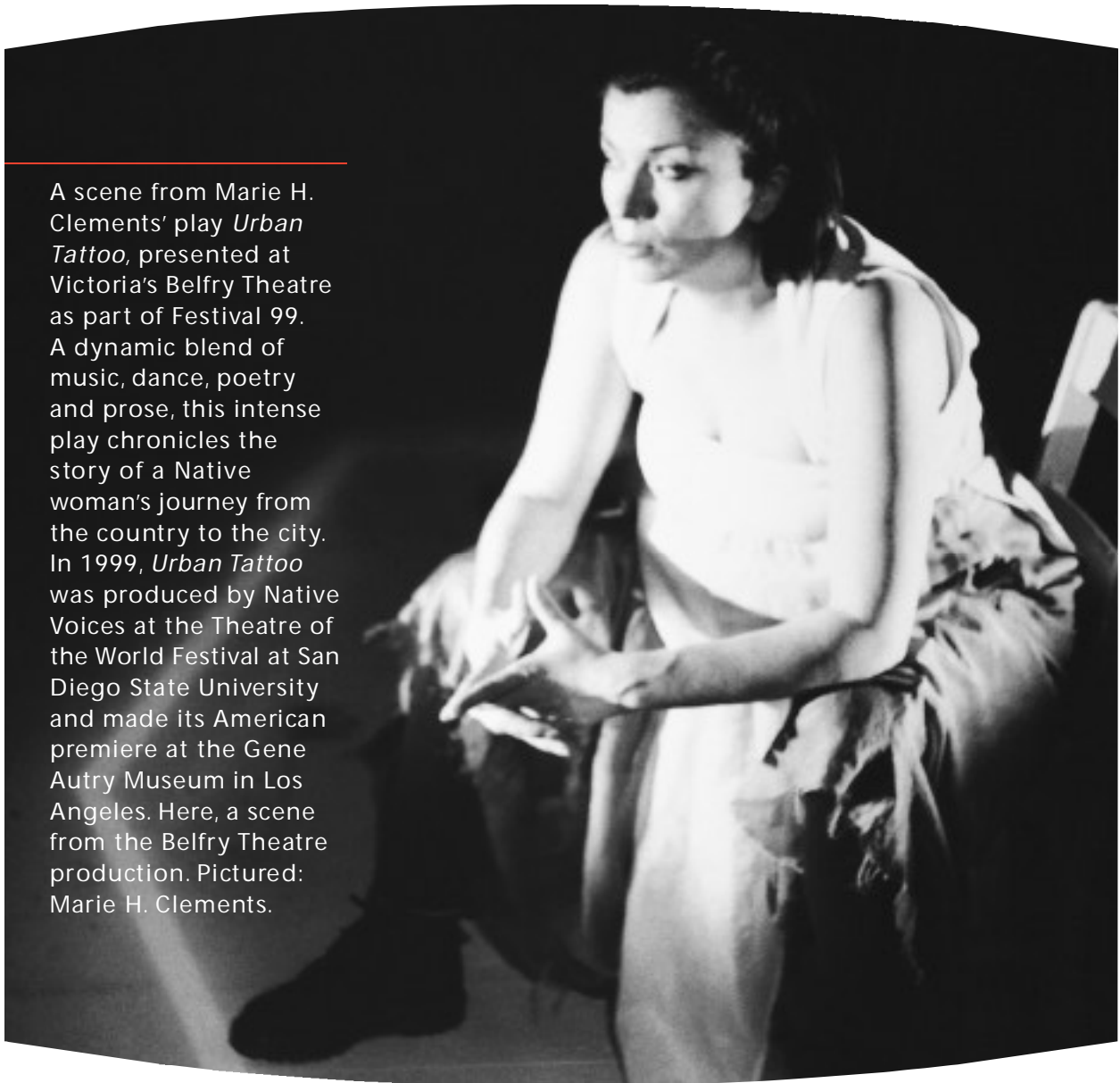


Photo: Teri Snelgrove

This year, the vast new territory of Nunavut became part of Confederation, and in a few months we will be celebrating the new millennium: two significant events in the evolution of Canada and of humanity in general that lead us to reflect upon the future. We at the Council are all well aware of the constant challenges that lie ahead. We do not intend to succumb to false optimism – but based on experience and the progress of the past fifty years, we are confident that we will

be able to rise to these challenges, for the greater benefit of the arts, artists, and the population in general.

Jean-Louis Roux, C.C.
Chairman