



STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021

WHO WE ARE

A landmark theatre company in the heart of Canada, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre has infused the arts and communities in Manitoba with vibrancy of expression for close to 60 years.

We know theatre is part of what makes our communities strong. Theatre forges relationships and cultivates understanding as we create and share art, drawing us into conversations about our beliefs and values.

With this 2017–2021 plan, we will strengthen our roots, forever connecting with Manitobans through the making and sharing of truly great theatre.

MANDATE

It is the aim of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre to study, practice and promote all aspects of the dramatic art, with particular emphasis on professional production.

VISION

Royal MTC's theatres and our province will teem with artists and audiences sharing in the act of imagining, enriching lives and communities.

MISSION

The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre exists to celebrate the widest spectrum of theatre art. Deeply rooted in the province of Manitoba, which gave it life and provides for its growth, Royal MTC aspires to both reflect and engage the community it serves.

VALUES

Quality

A commitment to quality is reflected in the writing of each play, in the actors, directors and designers who create each production, and in the volunteers, staff, funders and audiences who support it.

Balance

A commitment to balance is evident in the variety of our playbill and in the wide range of programs Royal MTC offers.

Affordability

A commitment to affordability is reflected in our marshalling of public and private sector support to keep ticket prices as low as possible for all Manitobans.

Accessibility

A commitment to creating theatre throughout the city and the province is evident in our festivals and touring productions.

Sustainability

A commitment to sustainability is evident in our rigorous governance structure, our sound business practices and our prudent financial management.



BUILDING ON OUR HISTORY

As we look ahead to our 60th anniversary, we are also inspired by our past.

When John Hirsch and Tom Hendry founded the Manitoba Theatre Centre in 1958, their goal was to create great professional theatre with mass appeal. As Hendry said:

“One can endlessly cite statistics to prove employment, economic impact and tourist magnetism. What the arts – given a chance – bring to a city is something in addition to all those material rewards. They give a great city an image of its soul.”

Today, Royal MTC produces 10 plays on two stages, a regional tour, two festivals and a wide range of youth programming. Royal MTC also develops new work, premiering an average of one new play each season. Steven Schipper has become the longest-serving Artistic Director in Royal MTC history.

Royal MTC’s John Hirsch Mainstage is where Manitobans can see large-scale professional productions, including classics like *Romeo and Juliet*, musicals like *Billy Elliot The Musical*, new Canadian plays like *Sarah Ballenden* and new Canadian adaptations like *Gone With the Wind*.

Royal MTC’s Tom Hendry Warehouse offers cutting-edge professional theatre that wears its content warnings proudly. It’s here we bring to Manitoba premieres of international work such as *Venus in Fur* and *August: Osage County*, new work such as *The Secret Annex* and exciting Canadian tours, including *Ride the Cyclone*.



Page 4, clockwise from top left: John Hirsch; Tom Hendry; Tom McCamus as Rhett Butler and Bethany Jillard as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind* PHOTO BY BRUCE MONK; Tal Gottfried as Anne Frank in *The Secret Annex* PHOTO BY BRUCE MONK; The Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival PHOTO BY BRETT HOWE; Ethan Ribeiro in *Billy Elliot The Musical* PHOTO BY ROBERT TINKER; The Tom Hendry Warehouse PHOTO BY JERRY GRAJEWSKI. **Above, left to right:** Allison Brennan and Matthew Edison in *Venus in Fur* PHOTO BY DYLAN HEWLETT; Premier Greg Selinger and Royal MTC Board Chair Gary Hannaford at royal designation event PHOTO BY TRACEY GONCALVES; Steven Schipper PHOTO BY JERRY GRAJEWSKI; The cast of *August: Osage County* PHOTO BY BRUCE MONK.

Our robust education and community engagement program includes special performances for high school audiences, enrichment activities such as lectures, tours and Q&A sessions, apprenticeship opportunities for emerging artists and craftspeople, and annual scholarships for post-secondary theatre students.

Royal MTC is the only regional theatre in Canada to produce a Fringe Festival; founded in 1988, the Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival animates the entire downtown for 12 days each July, and has a combined audience of over 185,000 at outdoor and ticketed events. Since 1961, Royal MTC has also toured our province and Northwestern Ontario, taking professional theatre to communities as far away as Flin Flon and Churchill.

Royal MTC's financial outlook includes a healthy endowment, held in perpetuity at the Winnipeg Foundation, which was renamed in honour of Artistic Director Steven Schipper's 25th anniversary with Royal MTC. Royal MTC maintains discrete capital, theatre development, and stabilization funds, to ensure we have the appropriate resources to address infrastructure and new play creation needs. The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre Foundation is separately held at the Winnipeg Foundation and provides special project support on an ongoing basis.

The broader community supports the theatre with public funding, donations and sponsorships, volunteer engagement and, of course, extraordinary levels of attendance. The impact of Royal MTC in the community has been recognized with two recent honours: the Government of Canada named our Mainstage building a National Historic Site in July 2009 and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II awarded us a Royal designation in October 2010.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS: 2011-2016

- World premiere of *Gone With the Wind*, adapted by Niki Landau from the novel by Margaret Mitchell, the first non-musical stage adaptation of the novel (2013)
- Royal MTC's endowment fund was renamed to honour Artistic Director Steven Schipper in recognition of his 25th anniversary, and total funds exceeded \$15m (2014)
- Winnipeg Fringe Festival breaks the record for number of performing companies, shows, sellouts and ticket sales (2015)
- Canada's first non-commercial production of *Billy Elliot The Musical* earns record single-ticket revenue (2016)



PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Royal MTC launched an extensive strategic planning process in early 2016. We looked to senior staff and board members as well as to external stakeholders to understand today's theatre context in Winnipeg. Input was gathered through a survey completed by trustees and staff; trustee and senior staff discussion groups; a focused discussion to confirm Royal MTC fundamental beliefs; a review of our current financial landscape; and highlights of recent audience omnibus research conducted in January 2016.

TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT

Famous for its winters, Winnipeg also has a reputation as a vibrant home to the performing and visual arts. Attendance rates tell us that the arts are important to Manitobans; and across almost all demographics, over half (55 per cent) of Winnipeggers reported that arts and cultural activities such as live theatre, ballet, or the symphony are important in their lives.

In this arts and entertainment landscape, Royal MTC is a leader. Winnipeggers attended Royal MTC more than any other local arts event in the past two years; and one third of Winnipeggers recently surveyed said they attended the Fringe (including free stages and paid performances). Royal MTC has a clear picture of our current audience and the audiences we want to attract and develop.

“Royal MTC is recognized for a consistently high standard of work ... It has a strong artistic presence in the community and is a well-known brand” (STAKEHOLDER, STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS)

From this foundation of success, we also know the world of arts consumption is shifting. We are witnessing national trends here at home – such as a narrowing subscription base, an increasingly competitive entertainment market with abundant choice, and new ways to experience culture – be it on demand, infused by new technology, or on a casual ticket basis. As busy Manitobans prioritize their discretionary spending and where they choose to dedicate their valuable time, they have increased and changing expectations of their experience at cultural events.

Manitoba is also an increasingly diverse landscape; we celebrate the richness of our province, including the founding Indigenous people, and aspire to truly connect to a multitude of perspectives. Manitoba's population growth is due to an increase in immigration and average family size, offsetting a continued trend of Manitobans leaving for other provinces.

These realities demand that we carefully consider our path ahead. As we do so, we imagine great opportunity.

We know Winnipeggers have a love for the arts, and through research, over a third say they don't see as much live theatre as they would like – challenged by busy schedules and competing choice. Our brand, infused by the expertise and skill of staff and artists, is a recognized leader in artistic excellence, in Manitoba and nationally. We remain supported by loyal patrons and supporters, and by positive, productive partnerships with arts organizations, here at home and outside our borders. As we scan our environment, we are reminded of the urgency to anticipate and adapt to our changing environment.

“Royal MTC will need to be an even more robust, creative and change-oriented organization to adapt to the challenges of today's marketplace and come out ahead” (STAKEHOLDER, STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS)

Looking ahead to our 60th anniversary and beyond, we will draw on our legacy and dedication to produce and present the very best work from around the world and our own community – always driven by our commitment to enrich lives and communities through theatre.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

MISSION

THE ROYAL MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE EXISTS TO CELEBRATE THE WIDEST SPECTRUM OF THEATRE ART. DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA, WHICH GAVE IT LIFE AND PROVIDES FOR ITS GROWTH, ROYAL MTC ASPIRES TO BOTH REFLECT AND ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES.

VISION

ROYAL MTC'S THEATRES AND OUR PROVINCE WILL TEEM WITH ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES SHARING IN THE ACT OF IMAGINING, ENRICHING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- ENSURE ROYAL MTC REFLECTS AND RESPONDS TO THE EVOLVING MANITOBA COMMUNITY
 - BE A FINANCIALLY STABLE ORGANIZATION, POSITIONED AS A LEADER IN THE NATIONAL CULTURAL SCENE
- GROW AND CAPTIVATE AUDIENCES – FROM FIRST CLICK TO FINAL BOW
- DO THE RIGHT THINGS WITH THE BEST PEOPLE IN THE SMARTEST WAY

SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES

- GROW OUR YOUNGER AUDIENCE TO CULTIVATE LOYAL THEATRE LOVERS, TODAY AND TOMORROW
 - ENHANCE FINANCIAL STRENGTH THROUGH REINVIGORATED FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY
 - IMPLEMENT SEAMLESS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TRANSITION TO ENSURE ONGOING ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP AND EXCELLENCE
 - REVIEW ROYAL MTC'S OPERATIONAL MODEL AND STRUCTURE TO ENSURE ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS AND PRIORITIES
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MOVING FORWARD

Over almost 60 seasons, Royal MTC has proven adept at balancing artistic vision and fiscal responsibility. The most potent evidence of this balancing act is the stability and overall health of the organization. Royal MTC's programming balances a more mainstream Mainstage playbill with edgier fare at the Warehouse. Audiences range in age from youth to seniors, and we ensure that we are communicating with them in appropriate ways. Royal MTC welcomes artists new to the professional stage to work with some of Canada's most senior artists. The professional staff is supported by an impressive volunteer corps of more than 1,000 individuals – including our Board of Trustees and committee members, our entire ushering staff, and the front-of-house team for the successful Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival.

Maintaining this critical balance can be a challenge in a shifting environment, but at its core Royal MTC will continue to create, produce and present extraordinary theatre for a vibrant audience. Our Board of Trustees will work with management to ensure our programming and budgeting continue to be bold but achievable, and we enhance our impact on the community.

Royal MTC's long-term strategic directions will inform our artistic and administrative leadership and decision-making, and ensure Royal MTC thrives and prospers. Royal MTC's short-term priorities will be activated and measured through operational plans for the upcoming four years.



Students at a Theatre for Young Audiences performance. PHOTO BY LEIF NORMAN

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Strategic directions are guideposts on our path towards our mission and vision. Our strategic directions work in balance, and guide Royal MTC management and board in development of future seasons and operational plans.

Each strategic direction relates to a critical asset that demands our attention and resources: our community, our financial health, our audience and our infrastructure (human and capital).

1. TO ENSURE ROYAL MTC REFLECTS AND RESPONDS TO THE EVOLVING MANITOBA COMMUNITY.

The face of Manitoba is changing. As a member of this ever-evolving and transforming community, Royal MTC will continue to connect to the diversity of voices, ages, perspectives and traditions that enrich our cultural landscape, ensuring we stay relevant and in step with our fellow Manitobans.

To achieve our goal, we will:

- Engage and entertain artists, audiences, staff and volunteers who reflect the evolving cultural and demographic diversity of our province
- Deepen our understanding of Indigenous perspectives
- Maintain the artistic excellence of our plays, attracting artists from across Canada and investing in artists in our own community

2. TO BE A FINANCIALLY STABLE ORGANIZATION, POSITIONED AS A LEADER IN THE NATIONAL CULTURAL SCENE.

Achieving financial strength is critical to the survival of arts organizations. In today's environment of shifting market forces and a narrowing subscription base, we will maintain rigorous financial management, informed by ongoing information-gathering to support strong decision-making.

To achieve our goal, we will:

- Focus on increasing philanthropic support to Royal MTC, expanding our current portfolio with a robust approach to community and volunteer engagement, and investment in building our sponsor, corporate supporter and donor base
- Respond to current and future audience trends in the broader arts market, through ongoing data collection and evaluation
- Invest resources in areas of priority

3. TO GROW AND CAPTIVATE AUDIENCES, AND ENSURE THEY ENJOY A POSITIVE THEATRE EXPERIENCE – FROM FIRST CLICK TO FINAL BOW.

Positive experiences with Royal MTC strengthen our brand, enhance our credibility and cultivate connections to current and future audiences. How we tell our story, engage with communities, stage top-tier productions that stimulate and entertain, and create accessible and welcoming environments are some (of the many) steps to create positive theatre experiences.

To achieve our goal, we will:

- Maintain connections with current and former Royal MTC audiences and theatre lovers
- Welcome new audiences to live theatre, either in our own facilities or through innovative programs that reach the broader community
- Harness new technology and media, with ongoing investment to develop and share the story of Royal MTC
- Improve our facilities, with a focus on enhanced patron environment

4. TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS WITH THE BEST PEOPLE IN THE SMARTEST WAY.

Creating great theatre takes the work of many committed, passionate and talented staff and volunteers. Our commitment demands we invest in our people and nurture key partnerships to deliver and champion engaging and inspiring theatre. Royal MTC will maintain a focus on nurturing a healthy workplace, continuing to spark creative and collaborative partnerships, and informed resourcing of operational and strategic goals.

To achieve our goal, we will:

- Deliver our succession strategy, and continue to develop best practices in human resources to foster a healthy organizational culture
 - Recognize the importance of our volunteer corps in delivering our programs, and build sustainability of this resource
 - Maximize training partnerships and opportunities for the development of local talent
 - Invest in research that will foster the development of a sustainable business model
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SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES (2017-2021)

To support achievement of our mission and long-term strategic directions, Royal MTC will focus on four priorities in the coming four years. These priorities reflect our current operating environment, as well as our ambition to remain a relevant, top-notch theatre, today and in the future.

ROYAL MTC WILL:

1. GROW OUR YOUNGER AUDIENCE, TO CULTIVATE LOYAL THEATRE LOVERS, TODAY AND TOMORROW.

Our approach

Expanding our audience – particularly attendance by younger patrons – is critical to Royal MTC's survival. We will continue to enhance our understanding of the needs and preferences of our current audiences, and develop strategies to better connect and engage with new and younger audiences. With a strategic focus to nurture a love of theatre among youth and young adults, Royal MTC's audience will also better reflect the diversity of the province.

To achieve this, we will:

- Strengthen relationships with high school audiences and community education partners to welcome more high school groups
- Expand and enhance marketing and community engagement in developing a plan to engage more young patrons
- Engage in dialogue with Indigenous leaders and communities of Manitoba
- Explore enhanced theatre experiences for all our audiences, including pre- and post-show engagement that fosters a deeper connection to Royal MTC

2. ENHANCE FINANCIAL STRENGTH THROUGH REINVIGORATED FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY AND CORPORATE SUPPORT, ENABLING GREATER ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE FREEDOM.

Our approach

A focus on philanthropic and private-sector opportunities, including investing in staff resources and enhancing trustee expertise, will be a key area of revenue growth. This priority builds on Royal MTC's recognized strengths in financial administration, and longstanding excellence in organizational management.

To achieve this, we will:

- Maintain and grow efforts in individual giving, endowment and major gifts
- Strengthen our relationships with the business community
- Explore opportunities for a major fundraising campaign

3. IMPLEMENT SEAMLESS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TRANSITION TO ENSURE ONGOING ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP AND EXCELLENCE.

Our approach

A smooth and well-planned transition to a new Artistic Director will further strengthen Royal MTC's reputation and build on our rich history. A clear process will engage the artistic community and stakeholders, align with our mission and vision, and attract the right leader to guide the company to a successful future.

To achieve this, we will:

- Establish a transition committee with a clear mandate and guiding principles
- Develop a timeline and communications strategy

4. REVIEW ROYAL MTC'S OPERATIONAL MODEL AND STRUCTURE TO ENSURE ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS AND PRIORITIES.

Our approach

Royal MTC must respond proactively to the financial challenges presented by a declining subscription base, an increasingly competitive entertainment market in Winnipeg, and shifting audience demographics. This approach includes ongoing analysis of the changing needs and desires of our audience, and ensures resources are aligned to realize success so Royal MTC continues to remain relevant, today and tomorrow.

To achieve this, we will:

- Examine our current operational model
- Review infrastructure and human resources

WHAT'S AHEAD

The Royal MTC brand – the family of plays and festivals – has become a source of pride for a wide spectrum of Manitobans passionate about theatre.

Our 2017–2021 Strategic Plan is a promise to our patrons, to the broader community, and to staff and volunteers.

The development of this plan reflects a process of listening and imagining; we are grateful for the input from staff, management and trustees. We reflected on ideas and opinions of current and potential theatregoers, and undertook a careful scan of finances and operations to inform our decision-making.

With this plan, we embrace a shared vision and affirm our commitment to great theatre.



The John Hirsch Mainstage. PHOTO BY JERRY GRAJEWSKI



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