INTRODUCTION

This article provides visual comparators of the three companies. Included are the stated mandates of each company (with updates, if applicable), pie graphs outlining each company’s sources of revenue, timelines indicating both artistic directors and attendance figures taken every five years from 1980 to 2010, and documentation of each company’s history of production of local and Canadian plays.

These visual aids illustrate the historical growth and development of each company; the diversity of revenue sources, from ticket sales to bingos, on which contemporary theatre companies depend for their continuing existence; programming practice; and the relative size and influence of the three companies. I have included them to augment the other articles in this edition: to provide at-a-glance summaries of selective historical data relevant to each individual company and quick comparisons among the three.

MANDATES

Starting with the oldest company, Western Canada Theatre, note a strong emphasis on serving the region throughout its history. It is noteworthy that the mandate to nurture new Canadian plays was dropped in its 1992 revision (perhaps as a reflection of increasing financial pressures). However, Canadian (although seldom new) plays continue to inform the company’s identity to the present, and, increasingly, those productions of more established Canadian plays are co-productions with other theatres. The 1992 revision also eliminated the playwright-in-residence program, as well as touring, again, likely as a result of financial exigencies. Commissioned plays have been infrequent of late, as well; that may be due in part to the unfortunate circumstance of the terminal illnesses of two recent artistic directors. Several of these revisions make the mandate’s claim to serving the region less strong than it otherwise would be. Although we are aware that the company makes strong efforts with, for example, Aboriginal plays to facilitate attendance of groups throughout the region, little has been done to bring the performances to the regions. An emphasis on fiscal integrity has been consistent, and, we believe, well maintained.

As this and other visuals indicate, TheatreOne has experienced the greatest change of the three companies. Although it has been consistently mandated to serve Nanaimo and vicinity, the company has undergone three name changes, and two significant changes in mandate and season. It would appear that this company has experienced the most challenges in terms of establishing and maintaining a strong and
consistent identity in its community.

In its mandate and in other ways, Theatre North West has been the most unchanging. While it has the strongest emphasis on fiscal management and legality, it is otherwise the most generally, even vaguely, mandated of the three. While it stipulates an obligation to be “beneficial to the community” and provide education “in the arts of the theatre” no definitions or parameters of community are included.

**ARTISTIC DIRECTORS**

Again, at a glance, there are stability and consistency in the Prince George and Kamloops companies that appear absent in the Nanaimo company. In forty-one years, Western Canada Theatre has had only six directors (two leaving due to illness) not a high figure in the fairly transient world that is Canadian theatre. In twenty-six years, TheatreOne, by contrast, has had ten directors, several of whom had very short stays of one or two years. By contrast, in a sixteen-year history, Theatre North West had only one director (who will soon retire). The onlooker at the Theatre One situation might be forgiven for wondering if the company’s unstable situation precipitated premature resignations, and/or if the resignations precipitated the instability. The onlooker might also wonder, at the other end of the scale, if regular renewal is advisable and healthy for small-city professional theatre.

**SOURCES OF REVENUE**

Once again, Western Canada Theatre and Theatre North West would seem to follow similar models. In both cases, the pie is more complex than it is in the case of TheatreOne. Perhaps it is necessary for contemporary professional theatre companies to cast their nets widely in terms of variety of revenue generation. For example, grants and donations total over one third of the revenue for both the Kamloops and Prince George companies; that portion of the pie is considerably smaller for TheatreOne. This may account, in part, for the financial issues TheatreOne has experienced. On the other hand, the Nanaimo company relies on Bingo revenues for over a quarter of its annual income; while Bingo provides revenue for all three companies, as a percentage of revenue it figures much less significantly for the other two companies.

Special events represent a small source of revenue for each company; perhaps the benefits of these events are more qualitative than quantitative, and they may help ensure repeat subscriptions, for example. WCT reveals sound fiscal management, in terms of savings, which account for more than one third of the company’s revenue. While this is a small sampling from which to extract quantitative generalizations, perhaps we may conclude that diversification is necessary for the professional theatre company in uncertain economic times and when arts organizations are particularly susceptible to government funding vagaries, as has been especially evident at the provincial level in recent years.

**ATTENDANCE FIGURES**

This visual allows comparison of subscription rates and attendance patterns within a company, as well as comparison among companies. Perhaps the variable of the age of each company should be taken into consideration, as building an audience is, obviously, an incremental endeavour.

Starting with the oldest company, we see Western Canada Theatre experiencing steady growth in overall attendance until 2000, which is perhaps unsurprising in a young company in a relatively financially healthy, growing city. The same pattern holds true for subscriptions. From 2000 on, a dip is evident (although there is a healthy recovery in totals by 2009, the decline in subscriptions is consistent). One
might speculate that this decline can be attributed to a growth in the number of competing live artistic and cultural activities as well as increasing movie theatre, television, and other electronic media options. Once again, Theatre North West is notable for consistency. After experiencing remarkable growth in the space of its first five years (with attendance more than doubling) its growth subsequently has been slight, but still, perhaps, impressive given the greater range of options in the technological age. Also impressive is the steady growth in subscriptions. Although we were unable to obtain all comparative figures for TheatreOne, those we have included illustrate a much smaller attendance than in the other two cities, which have similar populations, and suggest a very dramatic downward trend in recent years.

**LOCAL AND CANADIAN PLAYS**

While all three companies seem to have developed a tradition of incorporating a substantial proportion of Canadian plays into their seasons, the timelines indicate less focus on plays with local inflection and new and commissioned work.

For about twenty years, Western Canada Theatre produced several important plays with local connections. Under the artistic directorship of Michael Dobbin, the company produced Campbell Smith's *Timestep* in 1983; this work is based on extensive interviews with children and seniors in Kamloops and Vancouver. In 1985, David Ross, then artistic director, developed *Boris Karloff Slept Here*, a collective creation musical that critically and humorously examines Kamloops history from 1840-1915. There followed, in 1992 and 1996, two plays by former Kamloopsian Ian Weir (who has close ties to the early history of the company) that reflect Kamloops: *Flyin' Phil*, based on the life of BC politician and former Kamloops mayor Phil Gaglardi, and (also with Judi Bryson) *The McLean Boys*, based on the 1879 shooting spree of a quartet of young mixed race (Shuswap and European) men who were subsequently executed. Finally, the company commissioned the 2004 production *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout*, by Tomson Highway, which features four fictional female Aboriginal characters preparing a feast for the arrival, in 1910, of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier to receive the locally historically significant Laurier Memorial, a petition from Aboriginal chiefs in the region.

Subsequently, the company’s focus has been on repeat productions of audience-proven popular works by, for example, Norm Foster; the few premiers have been created by Weir and lacking in any significant local connections. However, there are a few noteworthy endeavours by the company on this front: the 2009 co-production with the National Arts Centre of George Ryga’s classic *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* was apparently the first professional production with an Aboriginal director (Métis Yvette Nolan) and the 2010 production of Cayman Duncan’s *Audible*, while not a premiere, was a second production by a local playwright (and member of the troupe Saucy Fops) that benefitted from development under the directorship of Jeremy Tow.

Theatre North West, similarly, showcases repeat Canadian productions by such well-known playwrights as Foster, Joan MacLeod, and Sharon Pollock. Artistic Director Ted Price has stated that second productions have become the company’s forte. Perhaps the company could also be said to have a small-city focus in its play selection, which has included works like *Ivor Johnson’s Neighbours, Leading Ladies, and Powers and Glory*; however, it has had no commissions and no works with actual local inflection. Theatre North West’s major nod to the diversity of its community would appear to be its 2007 production of Tomson Highway’s *The Rez Sisters*.

Remembering that the popularity of the Dunsmuir plays precipitated TheatreOne’s significant mandate shift, it is not surprising that they were followed up by such locally set works as, in 1996, Nicole Cavendish’s *It’s Snowing on Saltspring*, nor that, in 2006, the company commissioned *Being Frank* by Kim Blank, which was based on a colourful former Nanaimo mayor, Frank Ney. This company, too, seems to
have drawn on the popularity of such playwrights as Norm Foster; however, it also seems to have placed greater emphasis on acknowledging the ethnic diversity of the Canadian population through productions by Drew Hayden Taylor, Denise Chong, and Betty Quan, for example.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, these illustrations encapsulate both selected histories of each company and important similarities and differences among the three companies. As all three are small-r regional theatres operating in theatres of similar size in the same province, perhaps their similarities are not particularly surprising, especially in light of founding Theatre North West artistic director Ted Price’s acknowledgment of Western Canada Theatre as a major model for his company. More noteworthy for the purposes of this book, perhaps, are the differences—especially as reflected in the comparatively cautious, stay-the-course approach of Theatre North West and the relatively unstable history, reflected in attendance figures, artistic directors, and other illustrations, of TheatreOne.
Artistic Directors
Western Canada Theatre

sources of revenue

38.70% Grants & Donations
24.25% Ticket Sales
13.09% Sagebrush Management Fee
7.28% Kamloops Live! Box Office Mgmt
4.68% Goods & Services in kind
2.81% Bingo
2.11% BC Gaming Direct Access

1.82% Program & Grasslands Advertising
1.26% Special Events
1.00% Miscellaneous
0.93% Pavilion Bar, Concession, and Rentals
0.77% StageOne Theatre School
0.49% Amortization of deferred contributions

Figures based on 2010 financial statement.
TheatreOne
sources of revenue

MAIN FLOOR

BALCONY

43.63% Ticket Sales
28.84% Bingo
13.21% Bite of Nanaimo
10.78% City of Nanaimo

2.73% Donations
0.39% The Hamburg Foundation
0.42% Board Fundraisers

Figures based on 2010 financial statement.
Theatre North West
sources of revenue

45.48% Box Office
27.74% Grants
6.85% Donations
5.64% Sponsorship
4.12% Special Events

4.12% Bingo
2.68% BC Access Gaming
1.71% Concession Sales
0.88% Miscellaneous
0.77% Raffles

Figures based on 2010 financial statement.
Attendance Figures 1980-2010

1980
17,037 (7,220 season's pass subscribers)

1985
19,358 (9,563 season's pass subscribers)

1990
24,527 (12,005 season's pass subscribers)

1995
22,707 (9,256 season's pass subscribers)
6,128 (433 season's pass)
TBA

1995
6,128 (433 season's pass)

TBA

2000
24,358 (12,852 season's pass subscribers)
15,095 (2480 season's pass subscribers)
3,524

2005
17,734 (9,555 season's pass subscribers)
16,743 (3,283 season's pass subscribers)
TBA

2010
23,101 (9,023 season's pass subscribers)
14,401 (3,874 season's pass subscribers)
3,206 (375 season's pass)
Western Canada Theatre Canadian and Local Plays 1972-2012

1972/73   Renegade (K. Smedley); Jump (M. Murchison)    | 1973/74  The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (G. Ryga)
1975/76  Seasons (T. Kerr & S. Wright); Anne of Green Gables (Adapt. D. Harron); The Legend of the Golden Arrow (J. Weir); Don't call Us (Music by R. Fox; Lyrics by S. Wright & T. Kerr)
1976/77  the Komagata Maru Incident (S. Pollock)
1977/78  A compulsory option (S. Pollock)
1979/80  Billy Bishop Goes to War (J. Gray & E. Peterson); Free at Last (E. Nicol)
1980/81  Ma!  (E. Nicol); I'll Be Back Before Midnight (P. Colley)
1981/82  Scrooge (w. Graves); Nurse Jane Goes to Haawaii (A. Sterling & C. Smith)
1982/83  Billy Bishop Goes to War (G. Grey & L. Peterson); Freetales (E. Nicol); I'll Be Back Before Midnight (P. Colley)
1983/84  Country Chorale (R. Storey & J. Roby); The Kite (W. O. Mitchell)
1984/85  Boris Karloff Slept Here (Collective Creation by Western Canada Theatre); The Other Side of the Kite (W. O. Mitchell)
1985/86  filthy rich (G. F. Walker); Jitters (O. French); The Meval Boys (N. Foster); Valeage of Idiots (J. Lazarus)
1986/87  Garage Sale (D. King); Fire (P. Ledoux & D. Young)
1987/88  the idler (I. Weir); Prague (K. Karanada); Love is Strange (P. Ledoux & D. Young)
1988/89  The Delphi Oracles (J. Weir); Toronto; Mississauga (P. McLellan); Border Town Cafe (K. Rebar); A Fork (D. York)
1989/90  midnight madness (D. Carlyle); Harbour House (D. Kin); Blood Relations (S. Pollack); Fixing On Silver Spring (N. Foster)
1990/91  Bloody Business (I. Weir); Seven Stories (M. Panych)
1991/92  the nativity (P. Anderson); flyin' Phil (I. Weir & J. Bryson)
1992/93  Odd Fish (P. Boyd); Hunter of Peace (S. Stevens); Elvira and Mavis (I. Pitcher)
1993/94  St. George (I. Weir); Cornflower Blue (K. Rebar); The Honourable Member (I. Weir & J. Weir)
1994/95  The orphan Muses (M. M. Bouchard); The Trials of Emily Haymoun (J. Lazarus)
1995/96  A closer walk with Jean Chretien (J. Lalonde & R. Way); Ed & Ed (J. Pitcher)
1996/97  A closer walk with Jean Chretien (J. Lalonde & R. Way); Heat Wave (M. Bouchard)
1997/98  Atlantis (M. Hunter); Keeper of the Light (J. Pitcher)
1998/99  spring planting (K. Brennan); The Retreat (J. Sherman)
1999/2000  two ships passing (D. Carley)
2000/01  Comedy Network (R. Boudreau); mom, dad, i'm living with a white girl (M. Chan); if we are women (J. Glass); Anne (Adapt. by P. Ledoux); When the Reaper Calls (P. Colley)
Western Canada Theatre Canadian and Local Plays 1972-2012 (cont'd)

2001/02  two with t.j. (t.j. Dawe); yesteryear (j.m. Glass); wildcat (s. Johnstone); Respectable (r. Chambers)  
2002/03  vigil (m. Panych); unity (k. Kerr); scrooge meets the mummers (j. michael); larger than life (s. g. lee and v. lebourdais)  
2003/04  kiss the moon, kiss the sun (n. foster); ernestine shuswap gets her trout (t. highway); merlin (p. ledoux)  
2004/05  King o' fun (a. jones); elisa's skin (c. frechette); the attic; the pearls & three fine girls (j. brewin et al.); scandal (j. pitcher); bear santa (n. foster)  
2005/06  trying (j.m. Glass); hot flashes (p. ledoux); roady; the dreamer's quest (d. young)  
2006/07  the showdown of the whiskey girls (c. dobble & a. sable); the island of bliss (l. weir); the satichmo suite (h. bogerd & d. innis); still desire you (p. ledoux & d. young)  
2007/08  the ecstasy of rita joe (g. ryga); the man who shot chance delaney (l. weir); mesa (o. curtis); 600.0 middle name (l. overton); jack's Giants (j. maskelyne); outlaw (n. foster)  
2008/09  the showdown of the whiskey girls (c. dobble & a. sable); the island of bliss (l. weir); the satichmo suite (h. bogerd & d. innis); still desire you (p. ledoux & d. young)  
2009/10  letters from wingfield farm (o. williams); sexy laundry (m. rimal); billy bishop goes to war (g. gray and e. peterson)  
2010/11  thunderstick (k.t. ryga); the man who shot chance delaney (l. weir); mesa (o. curtis); 600.0 middle name (l. overton); jack's Giants (j. maskelyne); outlaw (n. foster)  
2011/12  seeing her again (m. tremblay); ubuntu (t. highway); the capetown project (theatrefront)
TheatreOne Canadian and Local Plays 1984-2012

1984-85  Goodnight Disgrace (M. Mercer)    | 1986  Jitters (D. French)    | 1987  The Melville Boys (N. Foster)    | 1988  The Dunsmuirs, Part 1 (R. Langley); Billy Bishop Goes to War (J. Gray and E. Peterson); Trafford Tanzi (C. Luckham)

1989  The Dunsmuirs, Part 1 (R. Langley); The Dunsmuirs, Part 2 (R. Langley); Everloving (M. Hollingsworth)    | 1990  spit Delaney's Island (C. Tidler); The Dunsmuir, Part 1 (R. Langley); Alma Victoria (J. Munsil); Black Apples (K. Roberts)    | 1991  Brother XII (K. Roberts); The Occupation of Heather Rose (W. Langley); The Nunsmuir's Party (R. Langley); The Nunsmuir's Party (R. Langley)

1992  Life Skills (D. King); salt-water moon (D. French)    | 1993  All the Members (D. King); salt-water moon (D. French)    | 1994  Goodnight Disgrace (M. Mercer)    | 1995  All I Ever Wanted (F. Moher); A Christmas Carol (J. Pitcher)    | 1996/97  It's Snowing on SaltSpring (N. Cavendish)    | 1997/98  The Number 14 (Axis); Opening Day (K. Roberts); Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth (O. T. Shay)    | 1999/2000  The Number 14 (Axis); Ethan Claymore (N. Foster)    | 2000/01  Nucklehead Fever (J. LaLonde); The Shape of a Girl (M. Chan)    | 2001/02  The Shape of a Girl (J. McLeod); Hot Flashes (J. French)    | 2002/03  Best Left Buried (M. Chan); The Concubine's Children (O. Chong)    | 2003/04  The Concubine's Children (O. Chong)    | 2004/05  The Concubine's Children (O. Chong)    | 2005/06  Mary's Wedding (S. Massicott); The Great Toilette (S. Massicott); We Are Women (J. McClelland); The Shape of a Girl (M. Chan)    | 2006/07  IvanK (M. Hollingsworth); Wring For Each Other (N. Foster); The Nunsmuir's Party (R. Langley)    | 2007/08  Vigil (M. Panych); Marion Bridge (D. MacIvor)    | 2008/09  New Canadian Kid (D. Foon); Wired (R. Garfat)    | 2009/10  Jake's Girl (J. Mackey); Wring For Each Other (N. Foster)    | 2010/11  Summer of My Amazing Luck (C. G. Adams); The Big Sneezee (Axis Theatre Co.); Old Thomas & The Little Fairy (Boo ge De La Bean)summary of The Gingerbread Man (J. Anderson); The Gingerbread Man (J. Anderson)    | 2011/12  Tamarack (E. Kuhn); Death by Volume (R. Garfat); The Gingerbread Man (J. Anderson); The Gingerbread Man (J. Anderson)
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<tr>
<th>Year/Season</th>
<th>Plays</th>
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<tr>
<td>1994/1995</td>
<td>The Occupation of Heather Rose (W. Lill)</td>
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<td>1995/1996</td>
<td>Amigo’s Blue Guitars (J. McLeod); The Melville Boys (N. Foster)</td>
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<td>1996/1997</td>
<td>The Number 14 (A. Wreggitt &amp; R. Shaw); The Garage Sale (D. King); The Diviners (J. McLeod); The Wild Guys (N. Foster); The Neighbor’s Wife (T. Beaupre)</td>
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<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>Western Edition (F. W. Murray); The Rosebud (J. McLeod); The Diviners (J. McLeod); The Neighbor’s Wife (T. Beaupre)</td>
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<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>I Had a Job I Liked Once (G. W. McInerney); The Delphi Pilgrims (J. W. King); The Blue Rose (C. Smith)</td>
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<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>Home Ice (J. O’Shea); The Clockmaker</td>
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<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>Dreams/Boy (M. Healey); A Guide to Mourning (E. Smith); The Kitchen Witches (C. Smith)</td>
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<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>Vinci (M. Hunter); Corker (W. Lill)</td>
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<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>Generations (S. L. R. Smith); Portia White (P. C. L. Wood)</td>
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<td>Power and Glory (R. C. Foster); The shores of Canada (K. Brennan)</td>
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<td>2007/2008</td>
<td>Theatre Sisters (T. Beaupre); We Are Women (M. McCloud &amp; L. Glass); The Rez Sisters (T. Beaupre); Hockey Moms (C. McCloud); The Number 14 (A. Wreggitt &amp; R. Shaw)</td>
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<td>The Chicken with the Head of a Scarecrow (C. Smith); The Number 14 (A. Wreggitt &amp; R. Shaw)</td>
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