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their betters. Without international political clout (or, consequently, responsibility), they were in a perfect position to harry those blessed with both – rather like the court-fool function of the Irish with the English. In both French and English Canada we had some very successful revues – and the tradition was extended, when Canadians masterminded such television shows as *Laugh-In*, *Saturday Night Live* and now *Second City*. Nobody can carve up the family as well as the family – or next-door neighbours.

After the Massey report things moved very quickly. Within two years we had the National Ballet Company (based in Toronto), le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (Quebec's leading theatre), les Grands Ballets Canadiens (also in Montreal), the Canadian Opera Company (with a young Jon Vickers in one of its opening productions), and the Stratford Shakespearean Festival in Ontario. Soon we had the National Theatre School and the Canada Council and many more theatre groups across the country – by now more than 160 of them.

The Stratford Festival became, at long last, the hoped-for breakthrough of the Canadian theatre onto the world stage. It has often been mistakenly thought of as the commencement of our theatre. But we should remember the vision that brought Tyrone Guthrie to Canada, not for the first time. He came here, he said, not to recreate the tired old traditions from elsewhere, but to build new ones. He saw the opportunity that Canada provided, precisely because of its long but *discontinuous* theatrical history, of making innovations on an artistic base of trained artists and sophisticated audiences.

Within a very few years we had other festivals (I think we got the idea of the summer potlatch from the Indians) – the Shaw Festival at Niagara, the Vancouver International Festival, the Charlottetown Festival with its Canadian musicals – and many new Canadian ballets, operas and plays. As

we celebrated our centennial in 1967, it seemed as if nothing could stop the momentum of the arts in Canada.

But pride goeth before a fall. The federal and provincial governments' building spree had been welcomed in the sixties by a theatre community convinced that proper housing was the necessary step toward a Canadian theatre that could compete on even terms with the rest of the world. But in the seventies it became apparent that companies saddled with huge operating costs could not be kept in the style to which they had so recently become accustomed. The established groups were prudently shelving their plans for more and bigger Canadian works and falling back on "safe" attractions – the old diet of classics and fashionable European and American hits. That left the path clear for those with little to lose: the shoestring theatres. With the major regional theatres providing mostly Canadian productions of plays from abroad, the pocket theatres now found their mission: the mounting of original plays. As a direct consequence, we do now have at last a considerable list of successfully produced Canadian plays, in both French and English. But will they play in Peoria? (which I guess is a lowest common denominator) or make it on Broadway? (which we may suppose is the highest common factor).

I think I first became aware of such preconceptions in 1949, when Gratien Gélinas' play *Tit-Coq*, after an unprecedented success in both French- and English-speaking Canada, opened in New York. What bothered me was not that the critics didn't take to it, or even that they could not recognize what to me were its virtues. It was that they turned its virtues into vices. What I knew to be deadily accurate about life where I live, they assumed to be theatrically contrived – like modern Judge Bracks uncomprehendingly crying, "People don't *do* such things!" Next I noticed that a good many Canadians believed they must have made a mistake in liking the play, because, after all, in New York they know a theatrical