

Dotted around the federal capital are many other museums — the Bytown Museum on the Rideau Canal, the Film Archives, Ski Museum, War Museum, Carleton University Arts Gallery, Dominion Botanical Gardens, Governor-General's Footguard Museum, Laurier House, Museum of Canadian Scouting, National Aeronautical Display, National Film Board Photo Centre, National Gallery of Canada, Museum of Science and Technology, and the Public Archives.



CP Photo.

Steve Beckow, a historian with the National Museum of Man in Ottawa, shows current and out-of-date retail products he is collecting at a museum warehouse. In a year he collected 5,000 different items for a project called *Tomorrow's History*.

Perhaps the most prestigious of Canadian museums is the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (a city with almost 30 museums in its midst). Its famous collection of Chinese art and archaeology occupies 20 galleries of the museum's west wing and is considered one of the best of its kind in the western hemisphere. The arts of Japan, Korea, India, Pakistan and the Islamic Near East appear in other ROM galleries.

Among the many attractions are a rain forest diorama; displays from the Galapagos Islands, Canadian Arctic, African grasslands and India; geology and mineralogy galleries; medieval and renaissance art objects; European galleries; dinosaurs and fossils; civilisations of Greece, Rome, Egypt, West Asia; costume and textile exhibits; ethnological collections of Indians of North and South America, Eskimos and the peoples of Africa, southeast Asia and the Pacific.

At the opposite end of the scale is one of the smallest museums in Canada at Rock Forest, near Sherbrooke, Québec. Its small size prevents display of anything much larger than impaled insects.

Some museums are on the move. The Vancouver Art Gallery, for instance, has a half-ton truck travelling British Columbia bringing a small collection of paintings and objects to people in small or remote areas. Other museums are on water — such as the former Royal Canadian Navy destroyer Haida, on the shore of Lake Ontario.

Archie Key travelled more than 52,000 miles back and forth across Canada to investigate museums for his recent book, *Beyond Four Walls*. He says: "The story of Canada is now being told chapter by chapter from Newfoundland to the Yukon."

## The Arts:

# Why an Englishman heads our theatre

By Susan Carson

To be offered, at 32, total command of an operation as glossy, as successful, as prestigious as the Stratford Festival is what champagne and caviar celebration suppers undoubtedly were created for. Surely it is a director's dream — a staff of 600, a whopping budget, the best actors, a loyal audience, a free hand to experiment and innovate. So another magnum, waiter, the night is young.

But when Robin Phillips was first offered the job, he turned it down flat. Without even pausing for a sip of champagne.

"I had planned on coming to Canada," explains the young Englishman, "so I applied to direct a production at Stratford, unaware that I was already being considered as a possible artistic director. They said they didn't have anything for me at the moment. Then a few months later they offered me the big job. (Artistic director Jean Gascon had announced his intention to resign to return to freelance work.) I wanted to come to Canada but I had no desire for a starry position."

## From rags to gloss

It was 10 o'clock on a Saturday morning. We were alone in the deserted theatre but Phillips was exquisitely turned out in caramel-coloured jacket, hound's tooth trousers, ivory shirt, delicately-tooled gold cuff links. His thick brown hair was skilfully clipped short and his hands gestured across the desk. He seemed to be enjoying himself enormously. So why had Stratford's glossiness been so threatening?

"I had just spent a year trying to save a theatre in London's dockland district (the Greenwich Theatre), doing plays back-to-back with only two-and-a-half weeks rehearsal. The theatre had really slipped to the suspect level and become a no-no on most actor's lists. They'd all politely decline to act there. Then we got people like Mia Farrow, Joan Plowright and Lynn Redgrave to come and act for only £25 a week. We did exciting productions. I worked harder than I'd ever worked before. I even scrubbed out the lavatories before every performance. And we succeeded. Today the theatre is a great success. Actors are anxious to be asked there. I didn't want to follow up that experience with a sure thing."

The festival persuaded him to at least come to Stratford and talk things over. He did, and he told the board he didn't see their need for him. He says what sold

him on the job was a 45-minute speech by a woman on the board who told him what she thought that need was.

Basically the problem was that the Stratford Festival, since its humble beginnings in a tent in 1953, had become almost too successful. Without a doubt it was one of the most spectacular summer theatre festivals in North America. Its actors were the cream of the Canadian stage. The costumes were exquisitely designed and beautifully executed. Lighting was expert, the theatre comfortable and attractive. Its performances regularly sold out and the gross in 1973 had been in excess of \$2 million.

## Creative spark needed

But at the same time, the festival was not attracting the critical acclaim it had in earlier years. The artistic success of the plays had been somewhat lost in the effort to maintain the festival as a tourist attraction. There was less innovation, less effort to mount the unusual, more and more emphasis on maintaining its reputation for the spectacular.

Not entirely through its own fault, since rapid growth is never easily dealt with, the Stratford Festival was in danger of becoming a Fat Cat. The new artistic director, if he were to get Stratford back on the path to increased maturity and stature, had to be someone who could ensure not only the continued commercial success of the operation, but one who could inject a creative spark back into the cultural dinosaur.

"It wasn't just that woman's eloquence that changed my mind," Phillips remembers, "but the mere fact that she was aware of the need."

Reassured, he abandoned a dazzling career in England as an actor and director at the Bristol Old Vic, Stratford-on-Avon, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Chichester Festival, the Greenwich Theatre and in films. He arrived in Canada last January to spend 10 months working with Jean Gascon before Gascon left in November. Much of the time Phillips criss-crossed the country, getting to know Canadian actors, directors, audiences and tastes.

"The most important thing was to see the festival from the point of view of other organisations. Does it loom big and bright from the distance like Mecca? Or is it something of a mausoleum?"