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CONTENTS

Festival Stage to be Improved	1	Invitation to Jagan	3
Award to Japanese Student	2	August Seaway Traffic	3
Canadian Education Review	2	Canadian Firms in Lima Fair.....	4
St. Croix River Agreement	3	Mobile Homes for Harsh Climate	4
TCA Prepares for Military Alert	3	Shipping at Canadian Ports	4
Pakistan High Commissioner.....	3		

FESTIVAL STAGE TO BE IMPROVED

To celebrate its tenth season, scheduled to open on June 18, 1962, the Stratford Shakespearean Festival will give its stage a "new look" -- wider, higher, and more dramatic.

Discussed and planned over a period of two years, the proposed changes to the famed pillared platform, which was originally designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch and Tyrone Guthrie in 1953, have been approved by the Board of Governors on the Recommendation of Artistic Director Michael Langham. Construction will begin in late November and the work will be finished sometime in February, 1962.

"Over the past nine seasons, the Festival stage has proved itself the most suitable in the world for Shakespearean performances," Mr. Langham said in discussing the nature of the new design. "Its possibilities for variety of treatment in production are seemingly limitless. Any adjustments to the existing platform, therefore, in no way depart from the original philosophic conception. They are purely technical revisions to obviate certain difficulties that have arisen accumulatively over nine years' experience."

REAFFIRMATION OF BASIC PRINCIPLES

Re-designed by Miss Moiseiwitsch, in association with Brian Jackson, the stage will further emphasize the basic principles of the close audience-actor relation that has for some years been influencing the architecture of other theatres in various parts of the world. The existing distinctive atmosphere will be retained, but the new designs create a larger playing area for the actors and improved

sight lines for the audience. In general terms, the plan is to widen and open up the back areas of the stage while the familiar "apron", jutting out into auditorium, will remain the same.

Changes, calculated to give a stronger, more aggressive appearance, will include:

- Raising the stage balcony eight inches;
- Reducing the number of pillars supporting this balcony from nine to five (the pillars will be larger in circumference);
- Moving the two side entrances farther toward the outer flanks of the stage wall, providing each with a larger platform and an overhanging canopy, and re-arranging the existing cluster of staircases;
- Eliminating the two upper window balconies, which have rarely been used, except for decorative purposes.
- Hanging the two main back wall panels on hinges so that they may be opened to provide additional entrances.

Mr. Langham noted that the gender of the stage "will change from feminine to masculine -- more in keeping with the robust nature of most of Shakespeare's works." "Heretofore," he explained, "the stage has seemed more in tune with the spirit of the comedies than with that of the histories and tragedies. As there are more of the latter in Shakespearean canon, it seems reasonable, during the next decade at least, to bring about what might be called a change of sex. A bolder, more spacious, more rugged appearance is therefore planned."

(Over)