

Innovative arts center a catalyst for culture

by Dorothy Wigmore

First, it was supposed to open in mid-September.

Then it was early November.

Now, the Arts Centre is to open around Christmas time, and, preparing for further delay, the official opening has been postponed until March.

No problems have developed so far in relocating scheduled performances, says John Crompton, Dal Director of Cultural Affairs. "I am very happy with the co-operation the Students' Union has given under the present circumstances," he said.

Performances have been relocated in alternate places, mostly on campus, Crompton added. The Theatre department has re-scheduled everything for this year for the small theatre in the old Law building. The Art Gallery has made tentative arrangements for both the Arts Centre and present locations, in the hope that they will be able to use the Centre later in the year. The Beethoven festival was moved to the McInnes Room for all but one performance.

Strikes among construction and trade workers during the summer are the main reason for the delay.

WHY AN ARTS CENTRE?

One question that can be asked about a \$5,110,000 building is why?

"The movement now in most cities," explained Crompton, "is to have a centre to put the arts in focus, because it's financially more feasible to centre these things in one place." Dal is the first Canadian university to have an Arts Centre, he added.

"A campus this size needs arts if it's going to have an arts program of the equivalent carried out on other campuses," said Crompton. "It would seem natural that Dalhousie should have it because of its stature in the Maritime provinces."

INCREDIBLE FIRST

Crompton added that he was impressed that an Arts Centre was built before a sports stadium. He called it an "incredible first". However, he was glad to see a sports complex being planned. Dal will be one university with a balance between sports and arts, he said.

"I don't think our centre is going to be a giant mausoleum to the arts," he said. "Because of the use to which the centre will be put it may be obsolete in a number of years, simply by the activities it will be used for."

The art gallery is A rated, meaning that it can present any

show the National Art Gallery sends out. It will be used by all three Halifax universities.

This area was once in a position where they had to go out to look for artists, Crompton explained. Now, artists are asking to come. "We've realized that in the last few years the demand for arts has increased. We're not the end of the earth now, we're just another stop really."

Another question which a university arts centre must face is what kind of entertainment will be brought and who may use the building.

Crompton is concerned about what entertainment comes to the centre, and about getting maximum use out of the building.

"We're looking at what is available in Halifax, and what is not. We try to get what is not currently available, like music and mime troupes, ballets, and theatrical productions that Neptune Theatre wouldn't present, such as those staged by the more famous European touring companies. That's not saying we're getting them," he said.

A GOOD PRINCIPLE

"It's a good principle," he added. "It avoids duplication, until we get audiences large enough that we can have duplication, as in Montreal and Toronto."

Students and faculty in the departments of theatre and music will put on shows, as part of their work during the year. For example, students and faculty of the music department will present a variety of music ensembles.

"I really want to see more

participation from the students," Crompton said, "particularly to determine whether they like the entertainment we're bringing in." He pointed out that there are students on every policy committee to help in this area.

"The purpose of the centre is mainly to develop an appreciation on the part of the students," he explained. "I would really argue with anyone who tells me the entertainment is inferior. We've tried to bring in all top quality."

One group that will often be seen at the centre is the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra. For other groups that want to use the building, "we'll have to establish a policy . . . the activity would have to be in line with the kind of act we are presenting to be acceptable. We do not want to turn it into a commercial enterprise."

Rent for the Cohn auditorium, the largest room, holding about 1040 people, will be comparable with similar space at other Canadian universities, Crompton said. For internal events, the cost will likely be less, and more often none.

OPEN TO ANYONE

The building will be open to anyone who wants to look around. Student cards are not required. The lounges and the foyer will be open at all times, during the building's regular hours. The art gallery will have set hours, but the sculpture gallery will be open at all times, "except the midnight hours", Crompton said.

The Arts Centre, when finished, will contain the Rebecca Cohn auditorium, a small theatre, an art gallery, and facilities for the music and theatre departments.

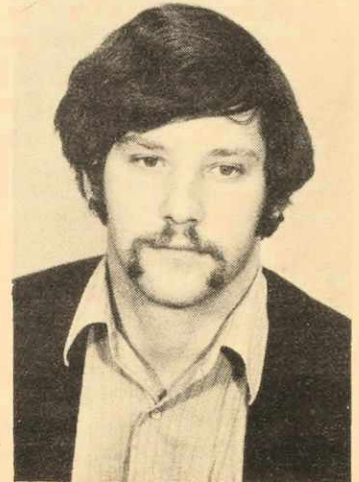
The world's a stage



The play's the thing, but for those involved in production, there's more to it than that. Rehearsals for *Inherit the Wind*, which will be performed for three days in late March are already under way.

Cast and production staff have already been chosen, although four parts are still vacant. (Prospective actors should leave their names at DGDS, room 322 or 324 of the SUB. A costume director is

know. I haven't acted before (except as Rumpelstiltskin in grade seven) so I welcome this experience," she says.



GREG YARROW

photo by Steve Hemphill



MARY MacLEOD

also needed, as are old clothes, pre-1940).

As the production process continues, the Gazette will carry a column highlighting members of the cast, their background and comments on the play, which is based on the Scopes "Monkey Trial" of 1925.

Says one of the actors, "In real life I'm Mary MacLeod, a third year sociology student from Montreal . . . at DGDS rehearsal I'm Mrs. Krebs, a middle aged woman of strong character, fanatically religious and unflinchingly straight. My role in *Inherit the Wind* is beginning to affect my everyday life — whether that's good or bad, I don't

"The play was a good choice. It is very amusing and also has a good plot. A lot of effort is going into the play. The cast and director have the necessary spirit and ability, and I enjoy working with them very much."

A third year commerce student, Greg Yarrow, is branching out and doing a little preaching on the side, as Reverend Brown, defender of the status quo.

He played a police inspector in last year's DGDS production of *Irma La Douce*, and participated in various high school productions. Off-stage and off-campus, he's "trying to make a buck singing my own songs."

He feels the play is "just the right mixture of gut feeling and higher aesthetic dramatic quality." As for the cast, they are "a bunch of real people who are really getting into this thing. Everyone is cordially invited to my revival meeting."

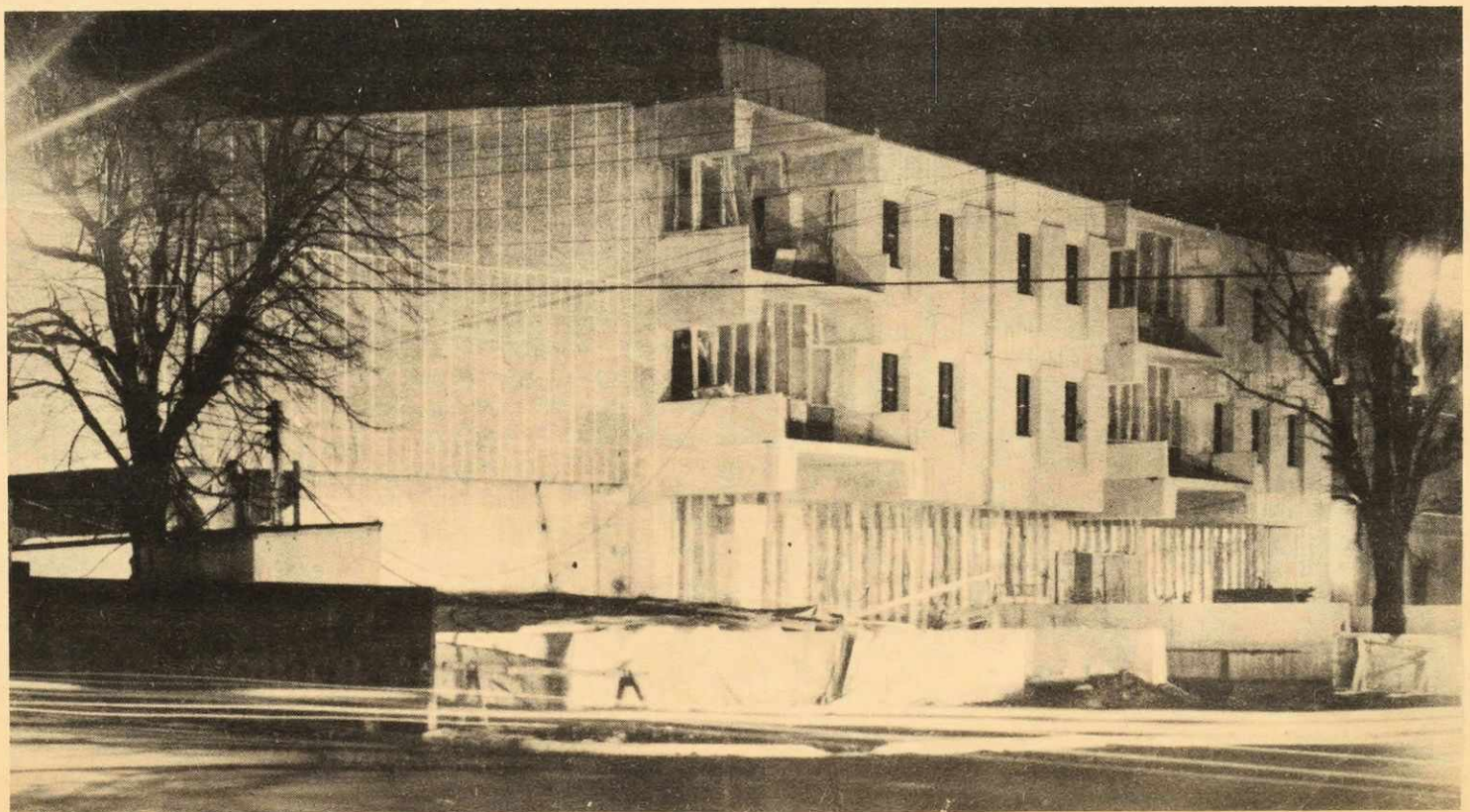


photo by Steve Wright