

# News of the arts

## Major expansion for ROM

In what has been described as one of the biggest moves of its kind ever made, collections comprising six million pieces will be shifted by Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum as part of a \$50-million expansion program.

The expansion will include five new galleries, a nine-storey curatorial centre and a renovated main building. The museum is using trained experts and a computer to shift its vast collections into storage. Only a third of the museum (the science galleries) will remain open to the public this year. In 1981, the building will be completely closed to reopen in the spring of 1982.

## Computer keeps track

"It will be like a giant game of checkers," said Toshio Yamamoto, a museum insect specialist, who has been assigned to coordinate the operation. "Almost all the objects will stay inside the building (some will go into a warehouse near the airport) but they will shift around from place to place as construction progresses. Every piece will be numbered and coded. A computer in Ottawa, at the National Museums Corporation, will keep track of where each object is each time it is moved.

Included in the move is the museum's enormous Chinese collection. During construction a type of "bomb shelter" will be built around the Monastery of Joyful Transformation's huge wall mural, which



*The Ming tomb prior to its relocation in ROM's Chinese Garden in 1959.*

is 38 feet long and 19 feet high. But another priceless Chinese wall painting, known as the *Lord of the Southern Dipper*, poses a problem for museum conservation experts. They must slice the delicate fresco into 18 panels and remove it from a mahogany frame that has held it to the gallery's west wall for 43 years. It was painted on a clay plaster about 600 years ago.

In the Chinese Garden outside the museum's north wall, an entire Ming tomb and its tons of stone accessories — the *Dogs of Fu* (each weighing 12 tons), two limestone camels, two statues, an altar

and two massive gates — must be moved. It took 350 Chinese coolies and three 20-ton railway cars to haul the tomb pieces from Peking to a sea port for shipment to Canada.

The museum's entire collection will benefit from the changes, maintains Mr. Yamamoto. Old walls will be waterproofed and vapour-barriered, climate and temperature controls will be installed to save the deteriorating treasures, and new galleries will permit expanded displays; only about five per cent of the museum's collections have been on public view in the past.

## Artists granted funds to perform abroad

Twenty performing arts organizations and artists have been granted financial assistance to perform abroad during 1980 through the Department of External Affairs' Bureau of International Cultural Relations.

Among the 20 recipients, involved in theatre, dance, music and artists' management are:

Coad Canada Puppets of Vancouver, the first foreign company to be invited by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington to participate in their Discover Theatre Series. The group will perform at least twice a day, five days a week from April 2 to 27. Following their month in Washington, Coad will perform in Atlanta, Georgia on May 2, 3 and 4 at the invitation of the Centre for Puppetry Arts. Le Théâtre

Sans Fil, a Montreal puppet company, will present the English version of their production *Le Corbeau Blanc (The White Raven)* at Showcase '80 — The National Showcase of Performing Arts for Young People, in Syracuse, New York on March 21 and 22. The Orford String Quartet gave two performances in the Artists of the Americas at the Y series in New York, on January 10 with soloists from Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, and on February 14 with contralto Maureen Forrester. The Canadian Brass tour of major cities in Japan from January 10 to February 10 includes approximately 15 concerts. At the invitation of Dance Umbrella Limited of London, the Danny Grossman Dance Company will tour Britain during February.

## Arts briefs

Canadian mezzo-soprano Catherine Robin recently won the Benson and Hedges Gold Award for young singers, in London. The 29-year-old Toronto-born singer was first among 44 singers competing in the international competition.

The National Arts Centre has released a CBS recording of Italian opera arias featuring soprano Frederica von Stade and the National Arts Centre Orchestra under conductor Mario Bernardi. The recording marks the first collaboration between the NAC Orchestra and CBS.

Two producers for the CBC program *Stereo's Ideas*, Bernie Lucht and Len Scher, have won Major Armstrong Awards, given annually in the U.S. for excellence and originality in FM programming, in the educational category.