

REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL FOR THE THEATRE UNIT
AT SIR WILFRED GRENFELL COLLEGE, MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF
NEWFOUNDLAND, JANUARY 2003.

Introductory

In early October, 2002, the three members of the Review Panel -- Dr James Dugan, the external representative from the University of Calgary, and Drs Lois Sherlow and Martin Ware of the Division of Arts, Grenfell College, MUN -- received "the Self Study Report" of the Theatre Unit, prepared in the previous two months, and written by Professors Ken Livingstone and Todd Hennessey. As reviewers, we studied the report carefully and consulted with one another, prior to our site visit, which took place from Thursday October 31st/2002 till Sunday November 3rd/2002.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the warm welcome and support offered to us both by members of the College Administration -- Dr Adrian Fowler, Principal, Dr Tom Daniels, Vice Principal, Dr Roy Hostetter, Head of the Fine Arts Division -- and by Professor Ken Livingstone, Chair, and the faculty, staff and students of the Theatre Unit. We would also like to register our appreciation of the diligence of Ms Joan Bessey from the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning, who coordinated our review, and thank Mrs Linda Humphreys and Mrs Golda Thomas of the Principal's Office and Mrs Nora Kennedy of the Division of Fine Arts for their work on the details of our site visit.

We were able to have thorough discussions with all concerned. This included opening and exit interviews with Dr Fowler and Dr Hostetter, and guidance from Dr Daniels. We greatly benefitted from small group sessions with faculty and staff of the Theatre Unit, and had a long and rewarding session with ten students enrolled in the programme. We would also like to acknowledge the help of Dr Hostetter and Mr Jim Chalmers-Gow in providing us with printouts of budgets, grade sheets, etc.

Particularly valuable features of the site visit were the working lunches with Professors Hostetter, Livingstone and members of the faculty and staff of the unit. These enabled us to more fully explore in a relaxed fashion matters that had been raised in a more formal manner earlier on.

After two very full days, we had the good fortune to attend two notable productions by the unit, which were being performed in repertory: Edward Bond's The Sea on Friday night and Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard on Saturday night.

We were impressed with the openness, the enthusiasm and sometimes the passion with which people spoke to us and e-mailed us. We would like to thank all concerned for making our experience such an illuminating one.

From all this we have gained very distinct impressions of the strengths and strains of the programme, which we do our best to outline in the report which follows.

1. Profile and Mission of the Theatre Unit

i. Profile

The Theatre Unit over the fourteen years of its existence has developed a very distinctive profile, which we think it important to note at the outset, since specific judgments and recommendations need to flow from an understanding of this profile.

From the very beginning, there have been two major aspects of the BFA in Theatre offered at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College. The first has been that the broad theatrical and artistic education has been centered in mainstage productions of high quality. The unit has become known for requiring high achievement in its productions from both its acting and stagecraft students. The belief has been that while a basis is provided in the general acting and stagecraft courses, students best hone the skills that they have learnt in the crucible of near-professional quality productions.

The second aspect has been that the BFA includes a strong Liberal Arts component. The Liberal Arts component is featured not only in the requirement that students study dramatic literature fairly extensively and take a range of other electives. It is also featured in a number of other distinctive features of the programme. The first is the emphasis that faculty place on offering more than a technical education, and their insisting that subjects are studied in the light of the theatrical and artistic enterprise as a whole. In pursuing broad perspectives, the students also have the great advantage of participating in the general life of Grenfell College with its explicit "Liberal Arts Mission" and nurturing of the interdisciplinary spirit. The culmination of the special "liberal arts" form of theatrical education provided by the M.U.N. BFA comes with students' experience at the Harlow Institute – the nearly two months that final semester students spend at the Harlow Campus of M.U.N. in England. This is the time when they are exposed to an exceptional range of theatrical performances, and cultural experiences and encounters which help to give practical meaning to much of their prior education and reading, and provide the basis for synthesis and interconnection, which is so important in liberal education.

As a panel, we are in agreement that the M.U.N. B.F.A in Theatre is a degree of a very particular kind. The goals are neither those of a conservatory nor of a specialized BFA. The aim of the M.U.N. programme is to produce graduates whose minds and imaginations have been broadly educated, are good generalists, but who at the same time have the experience and training to do well in a conservatory, or to enter the professional theatre at the apprentice level or higher.

ii. Mission

The profile that the Theatre Unit has developed over the years is a good fit with the missions of Memorial University and Grenfell College. Whatever reservations one could have about the unit's

emphasis on product over process, the emphasis on the students' achieving the highest quality in near-professional productions is entirely consistent with the importance laid on "excellence" and "quality" in the university's mission statement (Memorial Calendar/2002, 25). Further, the Theatre Unit's stubborn adherence to liberal arts goals is entirely congruent with Grenfell College's explicit "Academic Purpose" of nurturing "liberal education" and facilitating "a critical and open-minded pursuit of knowledge" (Memorial Calendar, 88).

Grenfell College is also committed to "teaching students in a variety of challenging contexts" (88). A feature of the Theatre Unit's programme that fills this purpose is its regular employment of two Master teachers in each semester (an arrangement which is the envy of other Theatre programmes in Canada). These Master teachers, who are usually noted figures in the Canadian Theatre, bring with them the excitement of professional mastery, and challenge students to excel with new skills and ideas. In this way students can feel themselves to be participating in the unfolding life of professional theatre in Canada.

The enormous contribution that the Theatre Unit has made to the theatrical and cultural life of the province (especially through major involvement in Newfoundland's three summer theatrical festivals) gives body to the third of Memorial's mission themes: to be "a Community Resource" and "to enhance its presence in the community" (Memorial Calendar, 88). Faculty, staff, students, and ex-students have been a driving force in the Stephenville, Gros Morne, and Trinity festivals, and it would be no exaggeration to say that without the participation of Grenfell's theatrical talent, the festivals would not have flourished as they have, and become such an important part of Newfoundland's summer economy.

As well as increasing the voltage of the provincial theatrical network, the unit has "expanded its horizons" by establishing "international linkages," primarily through the Theatre Institute at Harlow (Memorial Calendar, 25). The supervising faculty member and final semester students are regularly in contact with top British directors, designer, actors, and theatrical teachers. In the past year, a further development occurred. The chair of the unit, Ken Livingstone directed Al Pittman's play West Moon with a cast which included students and graduates of the programme, and took the play on a tour of Ireland. This opens up the possibility of further international collaborations.

The Theatre Unit, in our view, has evolved a profile which is consistent with the explicit aims of Memorial University.

2. Curriculum

i. Overall Organization of the Curriculum

It is not our intention to discuss the overall arrangement of the curriculum and the balance of "Theatre" and "Liberal Arts" courses offered. This was thoroughly explored in the first Review (1995) of the

programme, and major recommendations for change were made, and subsequently largely adopted by the unit. We are satisfied that, in general, the current curriculum, as revised, serves the students well, and achieves the balance between theatre and liberal arts requirements that was aimed at. We do, however, have concerns about several matters of substantive detail.

ii. Art History

We recommend that one minor, but important, adjustment be made in the organization of the programme. This is that the two Art History Survey courses (Visual Arts 2700 and 2701), now offered in the third year, be moved to the first year (VA 2700 to be offered in the fall and VA 2701 to be offered in the winter). This would entail moving two of the three first year electives to the third year.

Students with whom we discussed this expressed the unanimous view that these two Visual Arts courses provide vital context for their Theatre History courses, which they must take in first year, and also provide an invaluable general perspective for subsequent theatre and dramatic literature courses.

iii. Production-Acting and Production-Stagecraft Courses

We believe that the production-acting and production-stagecraft courses, involving participation in mainstage or workshop productions, (that is, Theatre 2080, 2081, 2090, 2091, 3080, 3081, 3091, 4080 and 4081) to be essential parts of the programme. We signal, however, that there are substantial concerns about the faculty staffing of these courses. It is our intention to deal with these concerns in the "Staffing" section of our report.

While we are in agreement that the weight given to production courses is entirely appropriate, we are concerned that the attention to production not be at the expense of the development of studio and workshop skills. We emphasize that it is very important on the acting side that sufficient time be devoted in acting classes to the development of studio skills, particularly to voice, movement and improv, and that class time devoted to these not be sacrificed for rehearsal on ongoing productions.

iv. Studio Skills

Another curriculum issue in need of attention regards the acting instruction independent of mainstage productions. Although these latter are both at the core of the curriculum, an important component of actor training takes place in the studio, where students may explore, take risks, and develop special skills. In the previous Review Report, a strong recommendation was made to include voice and movement in actor training. That report recommended that a full time faculty member with this expertise be added to the programme.

It is the view of the current committee that it is very difficult to find a specialist who combines

expertise in both of these skill areas, and it is also difficult to find specialists in these areas who could also function as generalists who can teach a variety of other acting skills and direct productions. We understand the difficulty of finding faculty suitable for a permanent appointment.

Balancing the need for such instruction against the constraints, we feel that the best available solution is to dedicate one master teacher position each year to the instruction of these skills. We note that master class personnel to this point have been concentrated in the areas of directing and design (although not exclusively), and this priority is no doubt driven by the increasing number of productions mounted each year. The point was made earlier in this report that the programme should be attentive to the problem of emphasizing production to the detriment of actor training in the studio, and clearly these areas -- movement and voice -- remain unattended to.

v. Stagecraft

a) In General

Stagecraft courses required by students majoring in Stagecraft to complete a BFA (Theatre) are: 1020: Introduction to Stagecraft, 1120: Stagecraft I, 2020 and 2021: Stagecraft II, 2090 and 2091: Production Stagecraft, 3020 and 3021: Stagecraft III, 3090 and 3091: Production Stagecraft, 4020; Stagecraft IV, 4060: Stagecraft Master Class III, 4090: Production Stagecraft.

Delivery of Stagecraft courses at four levels every term involves two faculty members who specialize in design, master class teachers specializing in stagecraft, and all five staff members in the Theatre program: Technical Director/Production Manager, Workshop Supervisor, Head of Wardrobe, Theatre Technician, and Stage Manager. All members of the Stagecraft team, whether faculty or staff, must combine instruction with other duties such as design and construction. The Stagecraft program suffers from difficulties in the categories (i) workload, (ii) curricular organization, and (iii) lack of dedicated staffing in the area of props (see "Section 5: Staffing").

(b) Curricular Reorganization

Stagecraft students interviewed during the site visit agreed that they would like to see reorganization of the curriculum. They feel that they are not adequately prepared for their assigned tasks on productions because only a short module (of three to four hours) is delivered in the Fall term in any given area, to be followed by another brief module in the same area in the Winter term. Students complained not only of inadequate preparation for tasks, leading to insecurity when assigned them (despite the availability of technical staff), but also noted they have forgotten last term's theory by the second term.

Stagecraft students interviewed said they would prefer one month's sustained instruction in each discipline consecutively throughout the academic year. While we realize that reorganization of the

curriculum to accommodate such a need would be no easy task, and that deployment of students on production might thereby be more restricted, we recommend that the program give consideration to conveying depth of understanding in the areas taught as well as breadth of knowledge.

Students interviewed also noted that during evening crew calls supervision was not available in all areas, and that consequently they might waste time working to the wrong ends. We recommend that the gaps in supervision be remedied.

3. Enrolment, Grading, Attrition, and Recruitment

i. Enrolment

Given the problems of accommodating acting students in productions and stagecraft students in the limited workshop space, the optimum enrolment for each of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years would probably be 18, 12 on the acting side and 6 on the stagecraft side. With 16 first year acting students and 8 first year stagecraft students, this would mean a total enrolment in the unit of approximately 78.

The current total enrolment of 70 students is close to this level. We note that enrolment on the acting side is slightly higher than the optimum (16 in 4th year and 15 in 3rd year) and the stagecraft enrolment is significantly lower (3 in 4th year, 5 in 3rd year). There is also a troubling gender imbalance, which, we understand, has become a problem in theatre programmes across the country. In 4th year, there are 8 males and 11 females, whereas in first year there are only 3 males and 13 females.

ii. Grading and Attrition

We have examined final grade worksheets for fall/1999, and are satisfied that the spread of grades is consistent with grade distribution patterns in other theatre programmes across the country. We observe that students are required to maintain 65% average to hold their place in the programme. In the light of this, the unit has a good student retention record, especially on the acting side. As an absolute percentage of students enrolled, there has been more attrition on the stagecraft side (in the 4th year, there are only 3 stagecraft students of the 6 who were in the programme in 1999). We do not think that this is particularly unusual, since some students may enter the stagecraft programme, thinking that it is centered on "hands on" and technical skills, and may not be prepared for the academic requirements.

iii. Recruitment

We strongly endorse the urgency expressed in the self-study report to pay strenuous attention to the challenge of recruitment and to increase applications, particularly from males and from would-be stagecraft students.

In our view, Theatre must figure prominently in the College's strategy of strengthening its

recruitment drive across the province (particularly on the Avalon and in St. John's), across Canada, and internationally. There is no room for any complacency that the unit's enrolment is close to complement, and so strenuous efforts do not have to be exerted. To maintain quality in the unit, there has to be an increased flow of gifted applicants.

In our discussions with students, we were told that the Theatre programme is not sufficiently well-known in Corner Brook and in the schools of Western Newfoundland. While we acknowledge the heavy burdens already made on faculty and staff, we think that every effort needs to be made to increase the unit's visibility in the College's principal catchment area. This may involve making more of an effort to offer matinee performances for local schools, more advertising, more involvement by individuals from the college in school drama enterprises, and increased efforts to reach the school populations through television, radio, and the internet.

4. Placement of Graduates

One of the positive features of the programme is the success that its graduates have enjoyed in finding employment. This, in our view, is connected to the programme's flexibility, to its providing a theatrical education with a strong liberal arts component.

While we are not in a position to base our comments on any detailed survey, we have made fairly extensive inquiries, and have confidence in the information that follows. We know of graduates of the programme successfully pursuing careers in teaching (including in "learning through the arts" programmes), in law, in business, in publicity, in public relations, in convention planning and so on. Individuals are also serving on Faculty in university Theatre programmes.

The acid test of the success of a Theatre programme lies in the extent to which its graduates find work in the theatrical profession. Here, we think the programme has had notable success. Over recent years, graduates and current students of the programme have made up about 80% of the theatrical professionals employed by the Gros Morne Festival, over a third of those employed at the Trinity Festival, and about a fifth of those employed at the Stephenville Festival. Numerous graduates have been employed by the leading St John's theatre companies, including Rising Tide, the Resource Centre for the Arts, and the Artistic Fraud Company, and graduates have also been prominent in the productions of Theatre Newfoundland and Labrador, based in Corner Brook.

Across the Cabot Straits in Nova Scotia, MUN theatre graduates (both on the acting and stagecraft side) have been strongly represented at the Atlantic Festival in Wolfville and at the Neptune Theatre in Halifax.

Further afield, MUN graduates are under contract with the Stratford Festival in Ontario and with the Manitoba Theatre Centre in Winnipeg, and continue to find employment with Passe Muraille, Soul Pepper, the Canadian Theatre Centre and Tarragon Theatre, all in Toronto, with the Shaw

Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and at the Globe Theatre in Saskatoon. In short, the programme has achieved a meaningful profile in a significant number of Canada's leading theatre companies.

It can be said that MUN theatre graduates are a sufficiently strong presence in the Canadian theatre to constitute a critical mass, which should be advantageous to future graduates of the programme. At the same time as noting this, we emphasize that it is important for the unit's faculty members to remain cognizant of the importance of providing career counselling to graduating students, and helping them to find employment.

5. Staffing

i. Staffing of Production-Acting and Production-Stagecraft Courses

The greatest challenge facing the Theatre Unit is staffing the production-acting and production-stagecraft courses in such a way that offering these courses is not damaging the health and welfare of the professors of record and does not affect their ability to lead a reasonably normal life. These courses comprise Theatre 2080, 2081, 2090, 2091, 3080, 3081, 3090, 3091, 4080 and 4081. These are cornerstone courses in the programme, and are of central importance in the students' education. Since the inception of the programme, the thinking has been that students learn best by doing, and, for theatre students, doing involves participation in high quality productions.

Following the recommendations of the first Review, courses involving participation in major productions have been formally required of students both on the acting and the stagecraft side. This means that two production courses are required of students in each of the second, third, and fourth years. This imposes a quite exceptional burden on faculty, since, in order to accommodate every one of the students, the unit is now finding it necessary to mount as many as six major productions in each academic year, and for each of these productions there must be an acting professor of record and a stagecraft professor of record (that is, the director and the supervising designer). We note that larger Theatre Departments in Canada present fewer than six major productions in a year, but these departments have the faculty resources to provide performance alternatives for their students.

Since mainstage production is the lynchpin of the programme, it would be reasonable to expect that the individuals who are professors of record for the production courses would be given recognition for their work, either through receiving teaching credits towards their teaching load, or through a full acknowledgement of their work as an important part of their creative and scholarly profile. Neither of these is the case. Despite the fact that these professors work between 14 and 22 hours (and often more) on production courses, they receive no teaching credit.

To underline the injustice and inequity of this, we note that professors offering similar production courses in the "drama specialization" of the English Department in St John's receive a full 2 course credits for teaching each such production course (as confirmed by the Dean of Arts' Office, which

indicates that this is an ad hoc arrangement, dating back to a time before 1996).

This gives rise to what can only be described as an unhealthy and unworthy situation. For the programme to flourish, professors must as a matter of course and in addition to their normal teaching load spend roughly twenty hours a week delivering the production courses. The necessity of offering a sufficient number of annual productions to accommodate all acting and stagecraft students means that this requirement is virtually certain to continue from year to year. In other words, it will frequently be the case that individual professors will have to direct or design as professors of record two major shows a year. This is double the norm in Canadian theatre departments, where it is unusual for an individual to have to direct more than one show a year.

In response to the situation which we have outlined above, we can only repeat what the authors of the first Review of the Theatre programme wrote: "We worry that the [commitment and contribution of faculty] may have been so far above and beyond any reasonable call of duty that the health and well being of individuals may have been placed at risk as a result."

There is no doubt in our minds that the primary issue here is the health and welfare of the professors, which is put under great strain by these demands. A further, and important, issue is the situation's impact on the professors' professional standing. Although at the time production courses were instituted, there was an agreement by the then Principal that work as Professor of Record on production courses would be credited fully as "a creative and scholarly contribution" to be acknowledged in the Promotion and Tenure process, the evidence we have received indicates that Promotion and Tenure Committees are increasingly reluctant to acknowledge such contributions. In view of the major contribution professors offering production course make to the programme, this reluctance amounts to a gesture of disrespect, and, when linked with the fact that St John's professors offering similar courses receive a full 2 teaching units for their work, means that the dignity and worth of Grenfell College professors could be seen as being called into question.

We believe that it is absolutely incumbent on all concerned to address this situation. We are in agreement that both the administration and the members of the unit need to use every possible ounce of goodwill, flexibility, and ingenuity to reach a meeting of minds and to solve this problem. It is not, we believe, our role as a panel to indicate a possible outcome.

All we can do is to indicate the following three possible lines of approach, each of them problematic in its own way:

1. As indicated in the "Self Study," the Professor of Record for each production-acting and production-stagecraft course could receive teaching credit, as for a studio course. These credits could be paid for as overload, which would obviate the need for new hiring. The additional income would make it possible for overworked faculty to take a much needed and health-giving vacation at the end of the teaching year.

2. The contributions of the professors of record for these production courses could be acknowledged as substantial creative and scholarly contributions to be taken fully into account by Promotion and Tenure Committees. We believe that this would require a directive to the P & T Committee by the Principal, and would probably require the agreement of MUNFA. Needless to say, this proposal does not address our overriding concern with wear and tear on the faculty.

3. Steps could be taken to reconfigure the Theatre programme so that there are fewer major productions, and the production demands on faculty are lighter. This would need to be linked to proposal 2 above that full credit be given to those offering production courses as a creative and scholarly contribution. In our view, this proposal would probably involve radical rethinking of the curriculum, which would be a demanding and time-consuming process.

ii. Promotion and Tenure

Apart from the workload stress issue around the mainstage production program, another issue looms in importance. The assessment by P&T committees of theatre production work is perceived in the theatre programme as unfair and even demeaning. Current policy is to view this activity as research and creative activity. Considerable discussion has taken place within the programme and within the Division of Fine Arts as to whether such work should be part of the teaching load. Whatever the outcome of that discussion, the vast majority of research/creative activity by the members of this unit — whether it takes place in-house or in external venues — will be in the form of theatre production work, as directors, designers, and occasionally actors.

It is extremely important that the faculty members of the programme feel that this work is evaluated fairly, and that their work is given proper professional respect. The faculty of this programme have assembled impressive lists of professional accomplishments outside Sir Wilfred Grenfell College. When faculty members are invited to perform, direct or design in professional venues, it is because they have earned the respect of their professional peers in the theatre. Therefore, they deserve to be accorded the equivalent respect of their academic peers.

It has been brought to our attention that a general principle guiding Promotion and Tenure committees is that a faculty member must attain an “off-island” profile. This is an appropriate principle in assuring that faculty achieve something higher than a local profile, but it has evidently led to the assumption that therefore a faculty member in the theatre programme must be professionally engaged off-island. This is an erroneous assumption, and it is imperative that P&T committees understand the theatrical equivalent of “dissemination of research findings.” In traditional disciplines, this phrase means that publication should take place in refereed journals with wide circulation in academic and/or professional circles, thus leading to what might be called a national reputation. In the professional theatre, a major theatre company might be seen to correspond to a major journal, and an artist’s work in that venue should be considered to be part of a national profile. For example, the Stephenville

Festival is one of the oldest and most respected theatre festivals in the country. Any director, designer or actor in Canada would consider it a major accomplishment to be invited to work in this festival. The list of theatre professionals who have worked in this festival is long and illustrious. Furthermore, many theatre professionals and academics from across the country attend this festival every summer, in addition to general audiences. While it might seem an impudent suggestion, it is probably true that the number of theatre academics and professionals who see the results of this creative activity exceeds the number who read a given article in an academic journal.

While the Gros Morne and Trinity Festivals may not enjoy the same level of reputation as the Stephenville Festival — largely because they are more recent developments — they are professional venues, and the Trinity Festival has most recently engaged Bill Glassco and Richard Rose, two of the best known directors in Canada.

To adhere blindly to the principle that a Sir Wilfred Grenfell College faculty member engaged by one of these festivals does not satisfy the “off-island” criterion is an untenable position. If a member of the theatre faculty at York University, for example, were to be told that he or she had to work in venues outside Toronto, which is one of the major theatre centres in North America, in order to satisfy promotion/tenure criteria, the position would be patently ridiculous. The committee recommends strongly that the necessary consciousness raising be done with P&T committees.

iii. Stagecraft Faculty Member

We believe that the need to add a new faculty position on the stagecraft side is a matter of urgency, and should be given priority over any other new hirings. Currently the two stagecraft members are stretched beyond reasonable limits, and the stagecraft staff members, who are required to help supervise nightly crewcalls, have to put in an inordinate amount of overtime.

The mathematics of the situation is simple. In each semester there are two permanent stagecraft faculty members, and three shows (which are also production-stagecraft courses), which have to be designed. Four nights a week, there are crewcalls for every one of the shows, and each of these has to be supervised. While it is true that a Master Teacher sometimes will shoulder a portion of the responsibility, the two permanent faculty members must bear the main burden. This means that there will be times when a single individual will on a continuous basis be required to supervise stagecraft work at the same time on two shows being rehearsed in different spaces. Occasionally this might be acceptable, but on repeated basis, it is not. The only long term solution to this problem is the hiring of a third stagecraft faculty member. We believe that this individual needs to have expertise in props design, construction etc.

Students, faculty, and staff noted during the on-site visit that the area of props is not adequately covered in the program. Occasionally, as in the Fall terms, 1998 and 2001, a master class teacher who specializes in props has visited the college. Otherwise, faculty responsible for costume and set design,

and the Stage Manager are forced into an area that is normally a separate field of expertise.

The Technical Director, in his portion of the “Self Study” (p.5), notes that the program is “in desperate need of a full-time Props Master to help instruct in the Stagecraft and Production courses.” While he notes “we have sometimes used Master Class teachers to help fill this need,” he argues that the use of Master Class instructors in this way “has gone against the philosophy of our core Stagecraft program being consistent and . . . every student should graduate with the same skills and learning opportunities.”

For the sake of both consistency and expertise in offering the basic props skills to all Stagecraft students, we recommend that a Stagecraft position be added that, by definition, includes, amongst other things, proficiency in and responsibility for props building.

iv. Workload and Professional Development of Stagecraft Staff.

All faculty members (Design), Master Class teachers (Stagecraft), and staff members participate in teaching components of Stagecraft courses at all levels during the day, and most participate in production courses (at three levels) during the evenings and during production weekends and runs.

Faculty members are involved in up to twenty (20) hours of teaching time required by production (see Section 4. Staffing, for further comments on overload).

The Technical Director underlines in the “Self Study” Report that support staff should continue to have contact and practical instruction time with students in their area of professional expertise. However, staff members are not formally recognized for their teaching contribution. While we do not recommend redesignation of any member of staff unless the teaching component surpasses a more significant percentage of their work than at present, we do feel that ways must be found to formally recognize their teaching contribution.

The Technical Director notes in the “Self Study” that continued involvement in the Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology and “promoting the upgrading or professional development of staff members will be essential to keep up with changes within the industry.” The panel endorses this recommendation.

6. Space

The previous Review Report noted difficulties with instructional space in the theatre programme, and this problem has not been adequately addressed in the interim.

In the stagecraft area, workshops double as teaching spaces. This is normal, but at SWGC these areas are inadequate as both shops and classrooms. The review team visited all the spaces and paid particular attention to those flagged as problems in the "Self Study." The study does not exaggerate the problems.

The props shop and the drafting room next door are appalling environments. They are airless rooms. The only indicator of ventilation is the relentless noise of the ventilation system, which makes the rooms virtually uninhabitable. The costume shop suffers mainly from lack of space, although we were shown by the supervisor a rough sketch of a plan to enlarge that area. The renovation would impact on storage, but it would improve the costume shop area significantly. The scene shop is far too small for the variety of work that goes into building a set for a production. In regard to these spaces, the problem is not just a matter of sufficient space to work and learn comfortably and effectively; issues of health and safety rise in significance in these conditions.

Another high pressure point is instructional space for acting classes, and rehearsal space. The unit has two classrooms that accommodate four years of acting classes and rehearsals for as many as three productions at a time. One of these classrooms, A/S 121, is totally inadequate for rehearsals, the floor space being smaller than the playing area in the theatre. The unit has resorted to renting space off-campus, but such arrangements are highly unsatisfactory.

The Theatre Program really requires three large studios to serve all the performance needs.

Space is the most important single resource for a theatre program, and the resource most difficult for administrators to adjudicate. Some of these problems stem from cuts made in the construction phase of the building, rather than from space allocation procedures. They are therefore that much more difficult to solve. A great deal of creative thinking and close cooperation with the administration will be required to find solutions.

7. Equipment: Stagecraft Lighting and Sound

The Technical Director concludes his report in the "Self Study" by expressing his concern that "shortly, we will no longer be a viable institution in delivering [the skills required to find work in the theatre, film, and entertainment industries] if we do not start a major upgrading of space and equipment." (See also section of this report devoted to Space). He noted during the on-site visit that the life span of the equipment of a theatre program should reasonably be considered to be approximately ten years. Since the equipment has been in use for this period of time, it follows that a serious study directed towards equipment renewal is due.

Currently, the program owns a reel-to-reel system for sound that has for some time been obsolete and is no longer used. The sound system currently used is based on equipment personally owned by the Theatre Technician. We recommend that a suitable replacement for this privately owned

system be purchased as soon as possible.

We also recommend the formation of a committee composed of Theatre faculty and staff members that meets every term to assess the need for renewal and replacement of equipment.

The lighting board is described by the Technical Director as “outmoded” and lacking in “scrollers or moving fixtures.” We recommend that feasibility of early replacement of the lighting control board be assessed.

8. Harlow

The compulsory Harlow component of the program (Theatre 4001: Theatre Institute at Harlow) is highly valued by both faculty and students. It is not only invaluable to the program itself but it is also important in recruitment and retention. All efforts should be made to promote the health of this part of the curriculum.

The only notable problem in the Harlow component of the program is student funding. As the “Self Study” authors report, “Finances have dwindled, and a trip that was largely the responsibility of the University is now shouldered by students.” While students do fund raise successfully to assist with their Harlow expenses, they have voiced strong concerns during the on-site visit that fundraising activities demand time and energy that would be better directed to their studies.

To assist students with their expenses of this compulsory course of study, we recommend

- (a) that the College seek corporate funding to assist with students’ Harlow expenses;
- (b) that College residence rooms be held for students during their absence free of charge.

9. Library

The Librarian’s report of holdings notes that the college library contains “995 monographs on acting, drama, stagecraft and theatre history [in the PN section] with 70 additional books on costuming in the GT classification.” In addition, the literature sections contain “a basic undergraduate collection of dramatic literature and literary criticism, with some depth in Shakespeare and 20th century drama holdings.” In the previous Review Report, it was noted that Canadian drama holdings were thought to be less than adequate (p.22). This area is still relatively under-represented and we recommend it as an area for development of holdings.

Subscriptions to six journals relating to theatre are carried, as well as to others relating to dramatic literature. Access to some e-journals also exists. There are 24 videotapes specific to theatre in the college collection, together with slides on European theatre history. The videotape collection seems to the panel to be very limited, and where the limitations of the library budget allow, some acquisitions

would be of benefit to students and faculty alike.

Although students and staff may order items from other campuses of the University, it would be beneficial to have a wider collection of contemporary plays, particularly Canadian plays, available at the college, for use in relation to both Theatre courses and English courses in Dramatic Literature.

10. Conclusion

In many ways we found the Theatre Unit to be in a flourishing condition. We were impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of the students whom we met, and also with the fact that the senior third and fourth year classes have suffered relatively little attrition. The productions of The Sea and The Cherry Orchard, which we attended, and in which many of these students participated, were strong and rounded productions, reflecting the capacity of the actors to work well with one another, and good teamwork by the design and stagecraft crews. The quality of the programme is reflected in the success of its graduates in finding employment and in their beginning to establish an MUN theatre network across the country. We are particularly impressed with the Master Teacher programme, which has really put the Memorial (Grenfell) programme on the theatrical map of Canada. This has been achieved in part by the bringing of outstanding theatrical artists for roughly ten weeks, who very often, after they leave Corner Brook, act as excellent ambassadors for the programme. The Master Teacher system also benefits the programme in another way. Regularly twice a year, Master Teacher positions are advertised in most of the Theatres and Theatre Departments across the country, which has the effect of creating a buzz and interest in the programme from coast to coast. We think it fair to say that the Master Teacher programme has contributed to Corner Brook's being known as a place of artistic excitement.

As well as recording our acknowledgement of the strengths of the programme, we would be remiss if we did not also point out that there are serious strains. As we have noted in "Staffing" section of our report, the annual production schedule puts extremely heavy and largely unrewarded demands on faculty and staff. We believe that these demands are so extreme that the situation demands immediate attention. The strain also shows up in other areas. The College itself is desperately short of space, and, as a consequence, has not been able to meet the expanding needs of the unit for space in any satisfactory manner. Three of the spaces in constant use by the Theatre programme, the drafting room, the props shop and the basement rehearsal space (A/S 121) are totally unsatisfactory for their purposes, and unhealthy into the bargain. In addition the College has been so starved in its operating budget (which should provide the funds for the replacement of outdated and worn-out equipment) that the Unit has been unable to replace sound and lighting equipment which is ten years (at least) out of date. As the Technical Director has pointed out, the situation is so serious that the Unit's capacity to educate stagecraft students trained to contemporary standards will soon be "compromised."

In our view, the key word that must prevail with in the Theatre Unit in the next few years is "renewal." The pioneering phase in Theatre at Grenfell has passed, and the next period must be one of

consolidation and new vigour. New energy will come if some of the staffing issues that we have flagged are addressed. But efforts by the Unit's faculty and staff will not be enough. If the University Administration wishes to sustain and renew what we judge to be a thoroughly worthwhile programme, it will have to work in cohesion with the Unit to address the pressing issues raised in this report and in "Self-Study Report." We find it difficult to believe that this will not involve some intelligent and thrifty deployment of fresh resources.

11. Recommendations

Curriculum

1. The Art History courses (VA 2700 & 2701) be taken in the fall and winter of students' first year, replacing the two electives, which should be taken in the fall and winter of students' third year.
2. More emphasis be placed on the teaching of studio skills, particularly voice and movement, in the acting classes offered in the first two years of the programme.
3. One of the four Master Teacher positions be reserved, if practicable, for an individual properly qualified and recognized as a capable instructor of voice and/or movement.
4. The teaching of stagecraft be reorganized so that more substantial modules (perhaps a month long) be offered in the discrete disciplines so that students are better prepared to work semi-independently on crew call nights.

Recruitment

5. Recruitment of Theatre students, particularly stagecraft students and male acting students, be an even more prominent aspect than it is now of the College's provincial, national and international recruitment strategy.
6. Efforts to recruit in the immediate Corner Brook area and in Western Newfoundland be intensified. If possible and appropriate, these efforts should involve all members of the unit, faculty and staff. Direct contact with prospective students is desirable, but attention should also be paid to the use of radio, television, and the internet.

Placement of Graduates

7. Career counselling be made available to graduating students on request.

Staffing and Promotion and Tenure

8. As a matter of urgency, the unit address the problems associated with the fact that Faculty members are required to act as professors of record for production-acting and production-stagecraft courses without receiving teaching credit or appropriate recognition for their work. We suggest that the unit develop two alternative strategies for dealing with the problem, and select the best of the two, which would then be proposed to the administration for discussion and practical action. We emphasize that this is a matter of the highest importance, and the current situation cannot be sustained.

9. The University recognize that faculty's directing and designing shows – in-house, within the province, and outside the province – constitute creative activity to be fully and appropriately credited as an important part of an individual's profile on his/her cv, and be properly recognized in the P & T process. This will require a letter from the College Administration to the P & T Committee to be kept in the latter's permanent files.

10 It be recognized as a matter of urgency that the most pressing of new positions required is a third stagecraft faculty member, and this need be given high priority by the College.

11. Efforts be directed to providing some sort of formal recognition of the teaching contribution of stagecraft staff members.

12. The unit do everything it can to encourage stagecraft staff members to be involved in the Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology, and promote and assist staff members' professional upgrading and development.

Space

13. The College examine as soon as practicable plans developed by Prof Carol Nelson & Ms Wendy Vey (Wardrobe Mistress) for the remodelling of the wardrobe area and one of the dressing rooms, and make a decision as soon as possible regarding the desirability of proceeding.

14. It be recognized that three of the spaces currently being used by the Theatre Unit, the props shop, the drafting room, and the second rehearsal space (A/S 121) are unsatisfactory and unhealthy. Immediate efforts need to be made to substitute three better spaces for these three rooms.

15. Long term plans be worked out in conjunction with revisions to the College's "Master Plan" to find second and third rehearsal spaces, and if at all possible, stagecraft shops and storage spaces adjacent to them. This may involve taking advantage of spaces vacated at such time as new building occurs.

Equipment & Supplies

16. Under the supervision of the Technical Director, a list be made of all worn-out or outdated sound and lighting equipment and also any sound and lighting items essential to the training of the contemporary stagecraft student which are not owned by the Theatre Unit. A timely schedule for the replacement of these items, duly prioritized, be developed in consultation with the Head of the Fine Arts Division and the College administration.

17. A three person Committee (of Faculty and Staff) be constituted to report annually to the Chair of the Unit and to the Head of the Fine Arts Division, giving a listing of physical equipment needing immediate replacement, and also a rough long-term schedule of replacement needs.

18. The current annual show budget (at present \$15,200) be restored to the 1990 level of \$20,000.

Harlow

19. The College seek corporate funding and sponsorship to assist 4th year students with their Harlow expenses.

20. The College explore the possibility of holding the rooms of 4th year Theatre students at Harlow free of charge during their absence in Harlow, and also examine the possibility of making up the lost revenue in renting the rooms to visitors during the period of the students' absence.

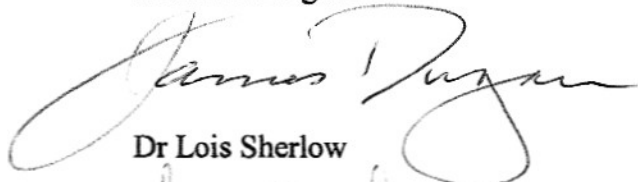
Library

21. Efforts be made to increase holdings of contemporary plays, particularly Canadian plays.

22. Budget permitting, efforts be made to increase the videotape collection specific to Theatre.

Respectfully Submitted,

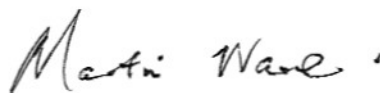
Dr James Dugan



Dr Lois Sherlow



Dr Martin Ware



14 Jun / 2003.