Un/Disciplined Performance:
Nonprofessionalized Theatre in Canada’s Professional Era

by

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Graduate Centre for Study of Drama
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Abstract

The discourse of Western theatre practice is founded on, and maintained as, a legitimizing struggle between the terms “professional” and “amateur.” This study moves beyond the traditional signifiers of Canadian amateur theatre—the Little Theatre Movement, the Dominion Drama Festival and connotations of “inferior” and “dilettantish”—to examine two nonprofessionalized companies that have witnessed the professionalization of Anglo-Canadian theatre in order to argue for the relevance and vitality of contemporary “nonprofessionalized” theatre practices. By drawing from Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory and Michel Foucault’s discourse theory and theories of formations of disciplines, this study argues that theatre professions seek to discipline, delegitimize and exclude nonprofessionalizing practices in order to gain capital (economic, social and cultural) at the expense of the creative freedoms inherent in nonprofessionalized work. It also considers the ways in which theatre scholarship omits critical discussion of amateur practice and how the term “amateur” is co-opted as a clouded pejorative
signifier and erased by the contested term “community” within theatre discourse (institutions, practices and the Canadian imaginary).

Following a case study approach based on archival documents, the study provides the foundation for a social history of Alumnae Theatre Company (1918- ), beginning with its early years as part of the University of Toronto’s University College Alumnae Association, by examining the relationship between amateur theatre practice and campus philanthropy, followed by Alumnae’s impact on Toronto’s professionalizing theatre scene in the context of alterity in Canadian theatre discourse. It then examines Walterdale Theatre Associates’ (1958- ) relationship to the emerging theatre profession before and after the opening of Edmonton’s Citadel Theatre in 1965 to argue that Walterdale benefits the profession and its professionalizing artists while negotiating complex concerns over institutionalization. Their longevity is explained, in part, by the fact that both companies operate “as if” professional, yet outside of professionalized disciplinary regimes.
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Archival research is hardly the solitary business it is purported to be. Lance Dittrich and Kent Sutherland of Walterdale and Catherine Spence of Alumnae granted me open and convenient access to their respective holdings. The staff at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, and Harold Averill and Loryl MacDonald at the University of Toronto Archives, provided infinite assistance. Richard Rose kindly forwarded his unpublished adaptation of Tempest-Tost.

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I must thank Mr. Maslan, my grade eight teacher, for instilling in me a fearlessness of the over-forty-page paper. I am, as ever, grateful to my father Brian and my late mother Marlene for convincing me at a very young age that writing is vital. And to my wife Amy, who has seen the best and the worst of graduate education, I owe a readiness for the regime, an awareness of the pitfalls, a sense of the sensible and the ridiculous, and the meaning of love.
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Abbreviations

Archive Locations

WEMM  Walterdale Executive Meeting Minutes (at PAA and WPA).

Groups and Institutions

AEA  American Actors’ Equity Association (1913- )
ACTRA  Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists (1943- )
CAC  Canadian Advisory Committee of AEA (1955-63)
CAEA  Canadian Actors’ Equity Association (1976- )
CEC  Canadian Executive Committee of AEA (1963-76)
DDF  Dominion Drama Festival (1933-71)
LOCT  League of Canadian Theatres
MTC  Manitoba Theatre Centre (1958- )
PACT  Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (1976- ), previously League of Canadian Theatres
TA  (Edmonton) Theatre Associates (1958-70), then WTA (1970- )
TC  Theatre Canada (1971-78), formerly DFF
UADC  University Alumnae Dramatic Club (1942-72), previously the Dramatic Club of the University College Alumnae Association (1920-42), later the Firehall Theatre (1972-78), then Alumnae Theatre (1978-90) and Alumnae Theatre Company (1990- )
U. C.  University College, University of Toronto (1853- )
U. of T.  University of Toronto (1850- )
WDC  Women’s Dramatic Club of University College, occasionally referred to as the Women’s Dramatic Club of the University of Toronto (1908-21)
Introduction

Un/Disciplined Performance

I don’t think there is any connection between amateur and professional at all. I can’t conceive of any bridge.


[It’s] hard to tell when the professionals leave off and the amateurs take over.


Acting, as a profession, is still in its infancy in Canada.

— Robertson Davies’s Trueman, “A Dialogue on the State of the Theatre in Canada,” 375, 1951

Canadian theatre criticism has unflaggingly traced the history of the field of theatre in Canada as if it were in a perpetual state of maturation.1 Embedded in this mythologizing discourse is the presumption that maturation is analogous to professionalization. A nation, this narrative implies, seeks to define its cultural identity by drawing its artistic practices “up” from amateur to professional status. To achieve cultural maturity—diagnosed from the symptoms of quality, skill and right-headed attitude—selfless artists, administrators and activists form associations that rally specialist, public and state attention to their cause. But simultaneous to this narrative is the socio-cultural impact of diverse amateur practices that continue to constitute and redefine the field of theatre.

Anglo-Canadian theatre, for all of its awards banquets, state-funding initiatives, degree-conferring drama departments and conservatory training schools, is hardly a self-sustaining

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1 On the maturation myth in Canadian theatre discourse see Alan Filewod *Performing* and “Erect.”
cultural resource. Each year, barely 15% of all Canadians set foot in a theatre.² Arts managers are hired to spend their time trawling for new and sustainable audiences and writing grant proposals, and they can rarely allocate grants beyond a one- or two-year plan. Moreover, “Canadian theatre” is largely an assortment of happenstential and fitful individual, group and government initiatives which, during the twentieth century in English-speaking Canada, are normally enumerated to include the Dominion Drama Festival (DDF) (1933-78), the Stratford Festival (1953- ), the Manitoba Theatre Centre (1958- ) and subsequent regional theatres, the Shaw Festival (1962- ), the National Arts Centre (1969- ), the four so-called Toronto “alternate theatres” (1968- ), Mirvish Productions (1987- ) and the Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals (1994- ) and its member festivals (starting in Edmonton in 1982). Here we are reminded that all but the Mirvish ventures and the Fringe Festivals were conceived as stepping-stones to future landmarks for cultural production. They were undertaken in order to set the groundwork for an eventually sustainable theatre, a “professional theatre” in Canada, comprising of a network of professional theatre artists, technicians and producers who could earn a living making theatre for themselves and, one hoped, for eager audiences across the country. The ironic reality is that the further Canadian theatre practice professionalizes, the less self-sustainable it seems to be.⁴

2 During the 2004-05 season, a little over 4.5 million people attended not-for-profit theatre in Canada. By comparison, this number is more than double that of the next discipline surveyed: music (not-for-profit). The Council for Business and the Arts in Canada asked 200 not-for-profit professional theatres and festivals to respond across the country. No amateur theatre numbers were given. (CBAC “Survey Data” 87, 45)

3 In 1970 the Dominion Drama Festival was reorganized (without a festival component) and renamed Theatre Canada.

4 To counter this unwanted symptom of professionalization, The Stratford Festival of Canada, for its part, has set up its “For All Time Endowment Fund” (a ten-year plan) in order “to provide a steady stream of income to the Festival’s operating budget” from specifically-raised capital ($50
In 1973, Robertson Davies contextualized, in decidedly fatalistic terms, the first and to-date longest lasting of Canada’s hallmark theatre initiatives, the amateur-spirited DDF. For him, the DDF “was an artistic venture dedicated to destroying itself in the cause of art”:

[I]t never lost sight of its desire to keep the art of the theatre alive in a country where it was greatly threatened, and in the end to bring about a better theatre, in the hands of professional artists, in which the amateurs would either have to relinquish their amateur status, or go back to seats among the audience. This is what it achieved. The foundation of our modern professional theatre rests on many stones, but the largest and the strongest is the achievement of the Dominion Drama Festival. The professionals may forget that, and it will do no harm if they do so, but the historians of art must never forget. (Davies “Forward” in Lee x)

Davies stood astride of two sides of a cultural phenomenon in Canada, aware of the value of the amateur spirit in an industrial culture that was professionalizing. And he knew that gain in the one practice meant loss in another practice prescribed to be ephemeral.

Anglo-Canadian theatre’s particular crisis is due, in part, to the fact that most of its stalwart institutions, from their outset, had a shelf life. They were set to expire once a sustainable professional theatre was achieved. The DDF, for its part, sought to encourage widespread theatre interest and production across the country; but it was eventually perceived as elitist and out of touch with 1960s counter-culture and grassroots creative activities. It was also accused variously of being too professional, and later too amateur, to be of cultural and economic value to the practice (Lee 5). The Stratford and Shaw Festivals were to give the “best” of the country’s theatre artists a place to encounter the “best” plays ever written in English (Shakespeare’s and Shaw’s) until contemporary Canadian plays took the field; but as tourist attractions they have, in some estimations, performed an act of erasure on the “Canadian playwright” and while they are (relatively) financially secure, their very perseverance and comparative drawing potential is an indication to some that a professional Canadian theatre remains virtually untenable. The million generated over ten years, mostly from private donations but also from Ontario Arts Council and Canadian heritage money and 2% of the festival’s yearly revenue). (Stratford)
professional regionals and the National Arts Centre were to be buildings located in the country’s major urban centres providing space for performance, training, experimentation and local theatre education; but most found ways to appear creatively obsolete to their own communities because in order for them to stay in the black—a requisite to sustain state funding attention—producing proven, foreign successes amounted to the fiscally responsible thing to do. The alternate theatres were to be “the home of the Canadian playwright” (Factory Theatre’s slogan) producing plays by and about Canadians; but only Tarragon Theatre remains relatively unencumbered by financial woes today while claiming to offer “the most consistently reliable and artistically grounded theatre in Canada” (Tarragon5). Professional theatre was to be built on temporary foundations planned, in part, with foreign blueprints and the faith that state funding was to produce local creativity and interest in theatre first; these foundations would then produce professional theatre when the time was right.

When this time would come was a matter of debate, but apparently it was believed that it could occur before audience interest was sustainable. In other words, “The Profession” would not be a result of public demand, but rather public demand would be the result of The Profession. As Davies makes clear, the question became not whether theatre was an art in demand, but to what extent amateur theatre practice was hindering audience approval of the field on the whole, and the professionalization of Anglo-Canadian theatre in particular. Thus, when actor Emrys Jones stated, during the height of Canadian theatre’s early professionalization, that “the incompetence of the amateur groups alienates rather than attracts the public to the theatre” (quoted in Lee 301), he presumed that the problem of low attendance is a question of quality rather than one of the public’s desire to be theatre-goers at all. If professional theatre institutions

5 From a partially attributed Globe and Mail statement published on Tarragon Theatre’s homepage (Tarragon) 26 Jan 2006.
in Anglophone Canada have been founded on premises that dictate their demise, why have amateur theatre companies survived for so long and experienced comparatively less crisis? As this study articulates, the answers to these questions are more complex than received histories admit.

Amateur theatres, unlike their not-for-profit professional counterparts, normally draw little to no government funding and thus rely entirely on box office and private donations. And because they do not pay their practitioners they are able to produce nearly any play they want as long as they can obtain the royalties to produce it. What their audiences—only in part composed of the practitioners’ friends and family members—want, they can respond to relatively swiftly. Indeed, the new play component has always been integral to long-standing amateur houses. It is this emphasis on the “new,” the “inclusive” and the “participatory” that has allowed amateur theatres to fit in well within a wider economy that may, potentially, bestow once again the amateur producer with “the keys to the factory.”

**The Amateur and Performance: A Wide View**

Chris Anderson, internationally-known new media guru and editor of *Wired* magazine, had a best selling book in the summer of 2006 titled *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More* in which he argued that digital media environments are providing amateurs with the opportunity to produce cultural objects and distribute them to their audiences as efficiently as cultural objects produced by professionals (Anderson *Long 3*). In digital environments, as opposed to traditional commercial environments such as catalogues and stores, “reputation” generates greater cultural capital than “professional credentials” because the product
finds its audience regardless of large-industry economic capital. Anyone with a computer and internet access can “post” his or her audio or video performance for mass distribution. Reputation is accumulated and may lead to audiences, a professional job and economic profits; or it may not (Anderson *Long 74*). For Anderson, producers and consumers must recognize that the entertainment “hit” or “blockbuster” will no longer shape cultural production and economic capital, but rather low and steady long-terms sales. The “long tale” that follows the quick peak on a product sales chart holds the key to securing economic capital when products can be made available widely, replicatably and indefinitely as they can now on internet-based sites such as the iTunes Store, YouTube and MySpace. And equipped with technology rivaling that of big-business art producers, amateur entertainment producers of film and music are already competing, with success, against professionals in the cultural marketplace by posting their own creative products (songs, performances and writings) for public consumption, for little or no compensation. Seemingly a nightmare for trained professionals in the business, according to Anderson the “pro-am” phenomenon is an inevitable good for diverse and diversifying societies.6

A live performance operates like a product of a digital environment in one important way: though produced and distributed in the physical world, that which it presents—the human body—is democratized (notionally, available to an entire population). Just as digital environments allow amateur producers to distribute their products without massive overhead, theatre has never solely been the domain of wealthy specialists because all that live performance

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6 At the conclusion of a public interview at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), moderator John Naughton prodded Anderson: “There is a personal problem for you though, and that is that you want to have a hit.” With the cool head of an editorial room celebrity who had held the pop culture crowd for nearly an hour with visionary rhetoric that problematized the future of entertainment industry monopolies, while justifying the cheap music downloads and peer-to-peer file-sharing posted to the net by, well, any one of us (except, maybe “professionals”), Anderson answered neatly, “I can live with that.” (Anderson “Long Tale”)
requires, at its minimum, is a body. If Anderson can conclude of digital environments that “Once upon a time, talent eventually made its way to the tools of production; now it’s the other way around” (Anderson Long 63), then we might say of environments in which live performance occurs that talent has always found (or sought training to use) its own tools of production. What is important to internet and theatre producers alike is the generation of interested audiences, and this can be achieved by both professionals and amateurs with potentially sustainable success, relative to the field in which they operate, without vast amounts of economic capital. Unlike twentieth-century forms of entertainment produced and distributed by traditional, big-business marketing (movies, television and video games), not-for-profit theatre has never required, and rarely snagged, large corporate dollars, though the time and effort spent by theatre practitioners and administrators has been great enough to damage their output. In comparison with other fields, the theatre’s means of production have always, literally, been in the hands of the producer.

“Natural Diversity” and the Amateur Producer

Does theatre compete with itself for audience attention? And if so, how? The field of theatre, Pierre Bourdieu observes, deals with its playwrights, actors, critics, audiences and readers—that is, its constitutive agents—hierarchically (Bourdieu Distinction 234). Baz Kershaw sees theatre as an active “disciplinary system” of cultural production that trains audiences through “spatial indoctrination that aims to embed normative social values in the behaviour of its participants [by way of] pleasurable submission” (Kershaw Radical 31-32). Theatre spectator-consumers tend to fall within predictable demographics: they are generally educated professionals, married or in cohabitation, with expendable incomes; or they are educators or art
specialists. Those who observe that the success of one theatre at generating audiences is a success for the wider theatre community due to audience crossover frequently dispute the opinion that theatres compete with each other for audiences.

If Anderson is correct, the place of the amateur in mainstream culture is already changing. He argues that diversity of cultures, politics, tastes and talents have been “suppressed by scarcity effects.” But now, because products can remain available to consumers indefinitely, the result is not just having “more to consume,” but that “all this natural diversity is now going to find voice.” He continues,

I think the most interesting thing is the notion of our talents as producers. One of the themes I talk about in the book is the notion of the rise of the amateur, the non-commercial producer. And if you look at myspace, most of the people who are uploading music to myspace are amateurs. Most of the people who are uploading video to Youtube are amateurs. Most of the people contributing to Wikipedia—all of the people contributing to Wikipedia—are amateur encyclopedia contributors. Virtually all bloggers are amateurs. The old model had no room for amateurs; only professionals had keys to the factory. Now everybody has a key to the factory. And I think we’re going to find that talent is much more broadly distributed than the old model allowed. I think that’s terrific. That’s my favourite part of all of this. (Anderson “Interview” 37:10-37:59)

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7 In Canada in 2003, according to Statistics Canada, for the live performing arts market “the highest income quintile made up nearly half of the consumer market” (Guo and Little 8). Susan Bennett’s Theatre Audiences corroborates this in drawing from a range of surveys worldwide (86-88), as does Pierre Bourdieu when he concludes that attendance in cultural activities, theatre in particular, increases with both education level and level of profession, with the exception of teachers and art specialists who tend to frequent cultural activities the most despite their relatively low incomes (see Bourdieu “Cultural”).

8 A commissioned theatre-going survey of professional and amateur companies in Edmonton concluded in 2001, “excitement for a particular theatre ultimately benefits all as it promotes live theatre to the broader population” (Criterion 17). Similarly, a survey of views of Irish theatre in 1995 concluded that of those people interviewed, many argue that far from taking from the audience for professional theatre [amateur theatre] acts as a major stimulus for interest in and knowledge of theatre, thus helping to create a following. In addition, those who are strong advocates of amateur drama argue that a good amateur dramatic society in an area will have positive implications for the development of professional theatre in terms of a well-equipped venue and an interested theatre-going audience. (“Views” 79)
The notion of the “factory” in the field of artistic production invokes thick dark walls concealing mysterious, production-line specialist activities that are inaccessible to those who have not been initiated, selected and trained. Reminiscent of Kershaw’s “fiddling factory” (Kershaw Radical 187), it is an emblematic edifice for nineteenth century labour and industrial progress. The factory means mass production at the expense of individual sovereignty. But when the “keys” are available to all, and the factory’s walls are virtual and therefore infinitely expandable, limits prescribed by definitions of words such as “talent,” “taste” and “professional” expand at pace.

Increasingly, culture and media commentators are citing the socio-cultural and artistic influences of the internet, home computers and portable digital devices on the economy. Yet the music, photographs, videos and even software produced for these media are frequently products created and distributed outside of professionalized sectors of our cultural economy. They are manufactured by the leisure-time labour of unpaid entrepreneurs who boast the abilities and responsibilities traditionally associated with designated “professionals.” These products emanate from the confluence of amateur passion and professional work. Their mass public acceptance has led to the redefinition of copyright laws and, increasingly, the readjustment of segments of the economy.

But of course theatre practices, having only flirted with widespread popular attention in North America during the twentieth century, have for millennia, negotiated boundaries between amateur and professional work. As benchmark forays into a sustainable professional theatre practice in Canada, the Stratford Festival, the regional theatres and the National Arts Centre each owe much to amateur practice; but as Davies predicted, Anglo-Canadian theatre, as a professionalizing set of practices, has not reciprocated the favour. These and other professional theatre institutions continue to benefit from amateur theatres across the country by sharing new
and experienced audiences and inheriting new theatre artists and their talents. While not every amateur theatre practitioner aspires to earn a living in theatre, many do, and some are successful in their attempts. Some of those who came to identify as professional theatre or radio artists and who were once associated with the companies examined in this study, include Andrew Allen (Alumnae), Barbara Allen (Alumnae), Carol Bolt (Alumnae), John Van Burek (Alumnae), Coralie Cairns (Walterdale), Tracy Caroll (Alumnae), John Colicos (Alumnae), Marianne Copithorne (Walterdale), Robert Corness (Walterdale), Hume Cronyn (Alumnae), Fred Euringer (Alumnae), Ted Follows (Alumnae), Leslie Frankish (Walterdale), Brad Fraser (Walterdale), David Gardner (Alumnae), Warren Graves (Walterdale), William Hutt (Alumnae), Urjo Kareda (Alumnae), Dennis Lee (Alumnae), Alan MacInnis (Walterdale), Leon Major (Alumnae), Frank Moher (Walterdale), William Needles (Alumnae), Diane Polley (Alumnae), George Ryga (Walterdale), James Reaney (Alumnae), Donald Sutherland (Alumnae), Mark Stubbings (Walterdale) and Vern Teissen (Walterdale).

But it is not this insufficient list of names or the many others like it that will seem new. It is the impetus that drives this study that is unique. General practice has it that if you want to learn about the place of amateur theatre in Canadian history, you need look no further than chapters and articles dealing with Canada’s theatre history up to and including “garrison theatricals,” for example, of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries before being thrust forward into the fifty years leading up to the establishment of the Manitoba Theatre Centre in 1958. After this, in your quest for scholarly material on the practising amateur, you may be led down the post-war path of the Dominion Drama Festival until it peters out into “Theatre Canada” in the 1970s and then is no more. Any further mention of amateur theatre refers to sub-par or irrelevant practice. This study seeks to question received notions of amateur practice by offering as case
studies two long-practising amateur companies whose work has traceably transformed from decade to decade, parallel with the onset of the professionalization of the field of theatre. It puts forward the argument that far from being diametric opposites, “amateur” and “professional” theatre practices are part of the same dynamic practice continuum. The changing usage of both terms through time articulates a lexical and practical shift from the dominance of one to the dominance of the other. As elements in a dynamic commercial market, but set off by theatre’s restricted field of production, the socioeconomic indicators of scarcity and taste have guided these shifts. And yes, so too has the love of the labour.

Overview of the Study and Selection

The discourse of Western theatre practice is founded on, and maintained as, a central legitimizing struggle between the terms “professional” and “amateur.” This is the struggle between “specialists” and “non-specialists,” “legitimates” and “illegitimates.” But at the same time that these terms are aligned as antithetical and employed in general usage as descriptors of practices, attitudes and employment statuses, their morphing connotations are seldom critiqued. The resultant relationship is not a dialectical synthesis of the practices forming the field of theatre but a cooptation such that professional practice synecdochically stands in for the entire field in critical discourse, while amateur practice is parenthetical or erased. Even amateur practitioners themselves, in an act of erasure complicit with that of the professionals, took to calling their companies “community theatres” in order to disassociate themselves from the descriptor “amateur.” But as we shall see further on the word “community,” while holding more positive connotations than “amateur,” presents a thicket of confusion itself. The result is a
collection of inherited misreadings of the histories and practices of constitutive amateur theatre companies and, by extension, a misreading of the wider field of theatre. Yet there remains a rich and diverse history of theatre practised by unpaid people for themselves and for their community.

This study begins to provide sustained critical attention not only to two contemporary amateur theatres, but also to the sort of “nonprofessionalized” theatre practice of which both are a part. Throughout, I use the term “nonprofessionalized” to refer to those contemporary “amateur” or “community” theatre companies (and the practices that they employ) that are not-for-profit and run their own season of generically diverse plays in their own dedicated building (owned or leased); adhere, nominally, to open participatory policies and relying mainly on volunteer “membership” commitment (both long term core and short term nomadic); and, importantly, have explicitly rejected the notion of becoming a professional company by declining to join professional associations (such as Actors’ Equity). How do these theatres operate and why? What are their chief contributions to the discourse of theatre practice? To what extent do their operations, past and present, mimic those of professional theatres and to what extent do they influence them? By studying nonprofessionalized theatres, what can we learn about the wider field of theatre practice that we cannot learn from studying professional theatres alone? What effect has the professionalization of Canadian theatre had on long-standing nonprofessionalized companies, and vice versa? How and why have these theatres redefined themselves during the period of professionalization? And, reciprocally, what can the study of nonprofessionalized theatres offer our understanding of the terms “professional” and “amateur”? How do these terms operate discursively within theatre practice and how do they represent (and
misrepresent diverse theatre practices, including “semi-professional,” “collective,” “co-op” and “Fringe” productions operating outside of “closed-shop” association regulations?

This study provides the critical tools with which we can reassess the practices, histories and influences of nonprofessionalized theatre on the field of theatre and the professional and nonprofessionalized work within it. In a sense, my argument provides a framework for the study of nonprofessionalized practices using theatre as its example. To do so, six initial hypotheses are offered:

1. Nonprofessionalized practices comprise a wide and influential area within the field of theatre practice.
2. Nonprofessionalized practices straddle theatre’s restricted field of production and the large-scale field of production.
3. Professionalizing theatre cultures discipline their constituent practitioners and exclude nonprofessionalized practitioners in order to monopolize the field of production and consumption.
4. Because constitutive elements of professionalizing theatre fields (income, time spent, aspirations, social status etc.) can be charted on dynamic continua, from amateur to professional, nonprofessionalized and professional theatre practices are not, in fact, mutually exclusive.
5. By using discourse analysis we can resituate nonprofessionalized practice within the field of theatre on grounds that are less reliant on the delegitimizing mechanisms of professionalization.
6. Professional and nonprofessionalized theatre practices are interrelated in four key ways:
(a) they enable and replicate each other’s systems of production;
(b) where professional practices do not serve the community, nonprofessionalized practices fill the gap by producing rare content and serving a need to “play” (as opposed to a need to create jobs);
(c) nonprofessionalized companies train and supply talent for professional companies; and
(d) nonprofessionalized companies develop and educate audiences, some of whom are not regular theatre goers.

This study is divided into several chapters intended to build and then test these hypotheses by way of a particular theoretical model of analysis.

Part I, organized into three chapters, considers the relative positions of professional and nonprofessionalized theatre practice within the wider field of cultural production. By way of Pierre Bourdieu’s formulation of fields of cultural production and Michel Foucault’s discourse analysis, it builds a framework for discussing the dynamics of professionalizing theatre cultures. It traces a number of the influential statements made about professional and nonprofessionalized practices in order to formulate a theory of theatre practice that is widely applicable to the study of theatre, inclusive of professional and nonprofessionalized practices. Along the way, it considers the battles waged by theatre practitioners to appropriate the “God words” “professional” and “community” in order to articulate their relation to each other and, ultimately, to win popular (and government) support for their practices.

Part II views two of Canada’s oldest English language theatre companies. Though they are only partially representative of the varied nonprofessionalized practices in the country, their continued longevity makes them useful case studies for tracing the trajectories of
nonprofessionalized practice and, inversely, the impacts of professionalization on theatre in English-speaking Canada. Thus, Chapter 4 discusses Toronto’s Alumnae Theatre Company by examining its foundations in the context of privilege, taste and institutional capital through to its subsequent positions as Toronto’s leader, at various moments, in classical theatre, modern “intellectual theatre” and new play production, while at one time producing in parallel with the “alternate theatres” of the 1970s. Chapter 5 considers Edmonton’s Walterdale Theatre Associates in light of its position alongside and in contest with Edmonton’s professionalizing theatre community by way of Foucault’s formulations of disciplinary regimes.

I have chosen to use a comparative case study approach in order to examine in microcosm the formation and evolving milieus of two enduring and influential nonprofessionalized theatres, and to place them in relation to each other in such a way as to comment more generally on the idea of practising outside of professionalizing theatre regimes. In large part, the choice is a practical one. No sustained critical inquiry into Canada’s contemporary nonprofessionalized theatres exists, making it difficult, if not impossible, to begin to research the field without starting with specific cases and their constitutive primary documents. This approach allows for preliminary work to be done in uncovering the choices and achievements of specific companies in order to begin to construct a narrative blueprint of theatre practices that, over the course of the past century, has in turns shared and rejected elements of a professionalizing theatre regime. Second, by setting into print researched knowledge of the companies in question, the case study approach affords the opportunity to test the particular framework set out in Part I of this study in order to illuminate fresh perspectives on nonprofessionalized production generally. Third, because the case study approach arranges the critique around specific companies in different regions (and not, for example, themes or
company “types”), it allows for discussion of a variety of conceptual spaces within, around and between the chosen companies; that is, it allows each case’s analysis to stand alone or to be subjected to comparison with the other case, or the field generally. Because of this, each case may be read as a preliminary investigation into what I believe proves to be a richer field than has heretofore been admitted.

In particular, I have selected Alumnae Theatre Company and Walterdale Theatre Associates for several reasons. The first relates to the question of access: as a doctoral student at the University of Toronto, and having grown up in the city, I was afforded by Alumnae a significant local research opportunity; conversely, as former artistic director of Walterdale and a former Masters’ student at the University of Alberta, I was already familiar with the company and with Edmonton (and vice versa). Second, both companies have been around long enough to generate significant production histories and internal planning documents. Third, as should become apparent, both take their theatre practice seriously (though both also promote “fun” and participatory opportunities) and both repeatedly view their work within and among their respective professionalized theatre communities. And fourth, both consistently show awareness of a theatre “canon” (in turns adhering to or rejecting it), a knowledge drawn primarily from some of their members’ ties to post-secondary education (in the case of Alumnae, on principle most of their members have post-secondary experience). In totum, these factors have led to my understanding of an assemblage of their histories as similar (for example, interconnected with their cities’ respective professional theatres and often focused on new play production) despite the fact that there is virtually no personnel connection between the two. Ultimately, however, variety is one of amateur practice’s most significant constitutive enablers, and this should be stressed whenever the opportunity for direct comparison presents itself.
It is the self- and field-awareness inherent in reasons two, three and four that make Alumnae and Walterdale particularly available to social critiques framed by Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. Largely due to the historically problematic position of nonprofessionalized practice as pariah in and among Canada’s emerging theatre profession (as articulated in the first part of this study), both companies have, at times, had to take explanatory, even defensive, postures when it comes to the theatre they produce, and even the fact that they produce theatre at all. In taking such postures, they have repeatedly generated internal and public utterances that show considerable awareness of their local theatre “scenes,” “communities” and “fields.” They have rarely adopted distanced stances such as “we’re just doing this for our art”; rather, they have often framed themselves, and have been framed by critics, as actively addressing the artistic deficiencies of their respective cities. These are, in Bourdieu’s terms, questions of position, position-taking (*prise de position*) and disposition drawn from extant documents that allow this study to take a fresh approach to how the constitutive agents that make up the field of theatre, such as theatre practitioners and their companies, align and view themselves; and they are questions illuminated by Foucault’s “archaeological” approach to encountering and arranging knowledge.

It should be stated at the outset that this study does not set forth in any way a “complete history” of either company. While there are countless rich histories waiting to be told in the many primary documents that comprise the foundation of this study, I have set out to historicize these theatres by offering a fresh theoretical focus from which further studies of nonprofessional theatres and their cultural practices may be drawn. Indeed, such a focus may be fruitfully appropriated to explore professional theatre practices, as well as amateur practices in other disciplines.
And finally, I want to emphasize that this critical discussion of nonprofessionalized practice does not seek to vilify professional theatre work, nor does it seek to be an apology for unpaid or underpaid theatre work. Quite the contrary: This study seeks to reveal the mechanisms by which nonprofessionalized practices contribute to and benefit from professionalized and paraprofessionalized\textsuperscript{9} practices, and \textit{vice versa}. It also seeks to provide examples of companies that have repeatedly freed the discussion of the production of art, if only temporarily, from the strictures of prescribed regulatory and disciplinary systems. There is much to be learned from revisiting, at intervals, the hermeneutics of nonprofessionalized practice; that is, revisiting the ways in which nonprofessionalized practices create meaning for a field of practice and production at different moments in that field's incessant drive toward professionalization.

\textsuperscript{9} I use the term “paraprofessional” in the sense of “a person to whom a particular aspect of a professional task is delegated, but who is not licensed to practise as a fully qualified professional” (OED). The designation of a theatre practitioner in these terms draws from the prefix “para”: “Forming miscellaneous terms in the sense ‘analogous or parallel to, but separate from or going beyond, what is denoted by the root word’” (OED). As practitioners operating outside of a designated “profession,” but using skills parallel to professional practice, theatre practitioners who engage in both nonprofessionalized and professional theatre at the same point in their career are thus “paraprofessionals.” The practices that paraprofessions constitute are “paraprofessionalized practices.”
Part I

Discourse, Practice, Mythologies and the Field of Cultural Production

The state of the profession in nearly all fields of artistic production is in crisis. Professionals working in theatre, film, television, music, publishing and photography wage ideological battles at the outset of the age of digital reproduction, even as they integrate digital forms into their creative processes and modes of distribution (Fox et al.). Lawsuits filed by professional artists and their unions against their employers, their governments and even their fans set out to grant them fair compensation for their now more widely distributable art and likenesses on “new media.” The confluence of digital media and the arts is now problematizing the very notion that diverse artistic fields occupy disparate discourses. Even the fans are producing and distributing their own art and in some instances successfully competing with professionals for popular consumer attention, acquiring for themselves fans of their own. Indeed, the borderlands between professional and nonprofessionalized artistic practice appear increasingly compromised.

Scholarly and popular critics are beginning to ask if “amateurization” is poised to compete with professionalization as the dominant mode for artistic disciplines in the twenty-first century. That such a question has already been posed in both specialist and popular circles variously as a threat, a hope or an observation provides fresh colour to the discourse analysis of fields of artistic production. For its part, the field of theatre has for centuries been made up of professional,

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10 Suzannah Fox et al.’s 2005 “The Future of the Internet” survey found that people expect “music, literature, drama, film and the arts” to be significantly impacted by “Digitization and the Internet,” with one expert predicting that “The area that will change the most will be arts and entertainment,” citing a number of performance-related fields and the impacts to their business models. “News organizations and publishing” was the area that respondents expected to change the most (v, 5).
professionalizing and nonprofessionalized factions. Indeed, its history as a discourse is the history of the disciplinary relationships, in turns supportive and competitive, between its constitutive professional and nonprofessionalized practices.

If the twentieth century was the century of professionalization, “amateur,” as a signifier of a type of practice, took on increasingly pejorative connotations. The notion of amateur artists as an identifiable—and identifying—demographic making sustained waves is relatively recent in some creative fields, such as film and television, whose origins are contemporary with accelerated industrialization and its emphasis on pervasive professionalization. Other fields, such as music and publishing, which have become recognized industries, have always included amateur practitioners. But only now are their amateurs finding distribution methods—particularly the internet—to rival and exceed those of their professional counterparts. Theatre’s amateur practice has for centuries found wide space, with distribution possibilities equal to or greater than professional practice. An analysis of its elements of discourse as they relate to the more familiar discourse of the theatre profession will go some distance not only in charting the history of the field of theatre practice, but also the dynamics involved in the ebb and flow of amateur and professional practices across disciplines.
Chapter 1
Methodology

In order to locate contemporary nonprofessionalized theatre practice, three overarching approaches frame this study. The first seeks to redefine the space of theatre studies as one that can usefully include nonprofessionalizing practices by applying Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory to the geographical and ideological space commonly referred as the “theatre community,” viewing its constitutive parts as comprising a “restricted field of production.” The second, Michel Foucault’s discourse analysis, addresses the ways in which primary documents may be used to destabilize received histories and resituate specific theatre companies within them; and, more broadly, it illustrates the ways in which the influence of these documents can be re-weighted in scholarly discourse by showing that they can speak to nonprofessionalized practices and the professional theatre regimes that seeks to delegitimize them. The third approach draws together extant analyses on amateur and “pro-am” practices to situate nonprofessionalized theatre practice within the wider field of cultural production.

For this study to appropriate Bourdieu’s field theory, two problems immediately surface. The first has to do with the fact that his research, particularly in *Distinction* and *The Field of Cultural Production*, the two publications from which this study primarily draws, emerges from the specific context of French culture. Bourdieu acquired the bulk of his survey data from 1,217 Parisian and Provincial residents in 1963 and 1967/68 (Bourdieu *Distinction* 13), while he frames his study on empirical surveys (his and 45 others; 521-24) that establish the link between French cultural practices and preferences on the one hand, and French education and social origin on the other. However, though the data and its arrangement is distinctly French—most
notably in his class/education-based delineations of Working, Middle and Upper class and low-, middle- and highbrow taste—a more general application of his field theory (including the dissemination and conferring of “taste”) to the transmission and arrangement of cultural capital within fields proves, as I hope to show, productive. No extensive field theory survey exists for the Canadian context.

The second problem has to do with the use of Bourdieu’s field theory to analyse theatre practice. Bourdieu’s statements about theatre specifically are rare, outside of several pages in *Distinction* and brief mention in other articles referred to in this study. Scholar Maria Shevtsova cites her own correspondence with Bourdieu to explain, “His reticence does not come from lack of interest, but from the fact that he saw himself outside the field, unable to access its inner workings” (Shevtsova “Outside” 6). However, the personal distance from theatre practice that Bourdieu himself perceived does not preclude the furtherance of his critique by others in areas his work had not yet, or hardly, begun to explore.

**Nonprofessionalized Theatre and the Field Cultural Production**

The space of nonprofessionalized practices in the arts is wide, yet rarely has it been charted. Robert Hutchison and Andrew Feist cite a survey in which it is estimated that in the UK during 1989-90 “just under 1.8 million individuals [were] regularly involved in amateur music and drama,” while about 12 million people attended amateur opera and drama (Hutchison and Feist xiii, xv). No such survey of contemporary amateur arts in Canada exists, yet tentative observations may be made based on scant, and somewhat disparate, data. For example, drawing from data available from provincial arts organizations that provide measured support to amateur
theatres (including one-time grants for professionally led workshops), the breadth of amateur theatre in Canada begins to emerge. Provincial theatre websites list a total of about 360 unique amateur/community theatre companies, some of which are referred to as “registered” and therefore may be considered to be “members,” in some cases paying members, to their respective umbrella organization. Other groups may have decided not to “register” and are therefore not listed, while still others are not required to “register” at all by their umbrella organization.\footnote{Approximate number of communities theatre companies per province (in parentheses) according to official provincial theatre organization websites: Theatre BC (80), Theatre Alberta (86), Theatre Saskatchewan (7), Association of Community Theatre in Manitoba (28), Theatre Ontario (100), Quebec Drama (8 English-language), Theatre Nova Scotia (25). New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and the three territories each have a few community theatres but none is listed in a single site. A company called ACTpei organizes the recently revived Prince Edward Island Community Theatre Festival.}

From these broad estimates, one might well imagine tens-of-thousands of Canadians participating in hundreds of nonprofessionalized theatre companies at any given time. Moreover, there is a variety of practices evident among these companies. Some specialize only in musical comedy, children’s theatre or Shakespeare. Some may produce only one or two shows a year, and then only haphazardly. Some may allow anyone who is interested to participate, while others more closely guard their coterie of participants. Some rely on a relatively predictable audience base (mainly comprising of family and friends), others expect high audience turnover, while still others expect a mixture of both regular and new audience members. Some of these companies may intend to turn professional as soon as they feel they can, while others have no intention of professionalizing; still others have, in fact, explicitly rejected opportunities or pressures to professionalize, both from within and without. From even this cursory tally of amateur theatres in the field of cultural production in Canada there is a sense of variety and freedom in their practices that is not possible under professionalized regimes.
Bourdieu defines the field of cultural production and consumption of symbolic goods as “the system of objective relations [between agents or institutions] and as the site of struggles for monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of the works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated” (Bourdieu *Field* 78). Agents, including “authors, actors, writers, critics, directors, publishers, dealers, etc” (Bourdieu *Field* 79) are aligned hierarchically based on their accumulation of cultural capital, with taste functioning as “the system of distinctions between groups” (Bourdieu *Field* 108). Operating under what Bourdieu terms “the law of the conservation of social energy” (Bourdieu *Field* 81), agents and institutions symbolically exchange economic, social and cultural capital, over time, in order to gain prestige and thus the power to determine, displace and allocate taste. This must be true for all constitutive “players” in the field, regardless of professional or nonprofessional status because the economy under which professional agents operate is the same as that of nonprofessional agents who contribute monetarily in their “day jobs,” at school or in their retirement. And it is the same for professional and amateur institutions who pay property taxes and/or rent to levels of

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12 Reworking Marx, Bourdieu defines “capital” as “accumulated labour,” exchangeable for “reified or living labour” (“Forms” 241). There are three types: economic capital includes money and property rights; social capital includes social connections, family name, school name and clubs; and cultural capital includes embodied capital (*habitus*, or one’s own “system of dispositions which acts as a mediation between structures and practice”; “Cultural” 487), objectified capital (owned objects) and institutionalized capital (academic, museums, theatres) (243).

Maria Shevtsova problematizes Bourdieu’s application of a cultural production model for theatre by arguing for difference between what she calls mainstream or “establishment theatre” worldwide and “other significant dimensions of the field of theatre such as performance art, happenings, community theatre, street theatre, ‘invisible’ theatre (Augusto Boal), the ‘third theatre’ and ‘barters’ (Eugenio Barba), and so on” (“Appropriating” 49). She further divides theatre practice by asserting difference in “local fields” versus “international fields” and in the now common differentiation between “theatre studies” and “performance studies” (49-51). Here, I propose that division is less productive than a rehistoricization and a revised perspective on the field’s constitutive elements.
government. In other words, no artists or institution lives outside the economic conditions that structure fields of production.

Within the wider field of cultural production are fields of restricted production in which culture specialists perpetuate the symbolic exchange of cultural goods, away from “a public foreign to the profession” (Bourdieu *Field* 115). Restricted fields legitimize the professionalized segments of theatre, music, painting, novels, poetry *etc* (Bourdieu *Field* 118). These are closed competitive fields of exchange that are unavailable practically and, to a significant extent, semiotically to the public in the field of large-scale cultural production. Each restricted field has “autonomy” from the others and “can be measured by its power to define its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products” (Bourdieu *Field* 115). Each is “mediated” by the constitutive institutions that claim authority over its internal and external relations (Bourdieu *Field* 121). Thus, it “can never be dominated by one orthodoxy without continuously being dominated by the general question of orthodoxy itself” (Bourdieu *Field* 117).

Within this orthodoxy are principles defined by, constitutive of and therefore unique to each restricted field. These principles include the degree to which a restricted field has historically tended toward specialization, or an “increasingly professionalized search for technical solutions to fundamentally technical problems [thus becoming] subject to the learned manipulation of professionals,” as Bourdieu suggests music and painting have done (Bourdieu *Field* 119). Works produced in restricted fields also require the receiver to have a specialized understanding—an “aesthetic disposition”—in order to understand the works’ codes, “and the code of these codes” (Bourdieu *Field* 120). This is why educational institutions in particular are integral, over time, to the renewal of fields of restricted production by training artists (producers), educating audiences (consumers) and scholars (producers and consumers) and
canonizing and consecrating works (products). Theatre in particular has followed this “functional logic” (Bourdieu *Field* 119) in cultures that professionalize the practice. And nonprofessionalized theatre practices have proved particularly flexible, during the early stage of a field’s professionalization, at introducing new codes by way of content and participatory encouragement in order to bolster and renew the field.

The question of orthodoxy opens restricted fields to discourse analysis of the kind offered in the present study. The traditional view of theatre practice holds that professional theatre practice *is* the field of restricted production; nonprofessionalized theatre, allegedly foreign to The Profession, lies outside of this in the public field of large-scale cultural production (only occasionally influenced by members of the restricted field through paid professional workshops and guest professional artists). Unions form within the restricted field in order to protect constituent agents and exclude those they deem to be undesirable, or casual outsiders. Their members may even claim to comprise the extent of the field itself. This view holds that all nonmembers are public hobbyists who mimic the structured practices of professional theatre in order to participate in a practice that is presumably disconnected from the field’s legitimizing forces of symbolic exchange. Thus, nonprofessionalized theatre receives limited attention and no legitimacy from agents within the restricted field, including critics, producers, professional artists and scholars.

But following such a path of specialized exclusivity has left theatre’s professionalized restricted field with an “artificially supported market for works of restricted scope,” a market that is in opposition, “far more brutal than elsewhere,” to for-profit commercial forms of performance
As Bourdieu points out, the ideologized creative liberty of art-for-art’s-sake artists who are “highly professionalized” is set at odds with the laws of the market; this is the divide “between works which create their public and works created by their public” (Bourdieu *Field* 127). An alternative view might loosen such exclusivist, restrictive boundaries and hold that all theatre practice competes for capital regardless of specialist status (for example, Walterdale Theatre Associates’ influence on the professionalizing field of theatre in Edmonton). Practitioners at nonprofessionalized companies, who are particularly interested artistic producers as well as potential audience members, might thus be viewed as included in the restricted field of theatre because they educate a wider base more directly in specialist codes with their training and self-production practices. The difference between these two views (I offer them as examples, not as exclusive binaries) pivots on whether or not one defines professional practice as a restrictive absolute.

**Discourses, Sources and the Field of Theatre**

Scant critical attention has been paid to contemporary nonprofessionalized practice, let alone the two companies considered in this study. Despite Alumnae’s achievements and contributions, there is virtually no scholarly writing on the company. Frances Halpenny, an influential member of Alumnae since the 1940s, has an entry on “University Alumnae Dramatic Club” (the group’s name in the mid-twentieth century) in Eugene Benson and L. W. Connolly’s *Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre*. Alumnae is also given a gloss in Ann Saddlemyer and

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13 This was evident, for example, in the distancing tactics engaged by the Canadian Actors’ Equity Association toward the non-Equity professional Blue Man Group Inc. in Toronto in 2006 when the latter refused to hire at wage local Equity talent for its indefinite run. The Toronto show closed within a year and half. (James Adams “Unions” and “Blue”)
Richard Plant’s edited *Later Stages: Essays in Ontario Theatre from the First World War to the 1970s*. One moment in the group’s history involving the New Play Society, referred to later on, is given a paragraph in Paula Sperdakos’s biography of Dora Mavor Moore. Curiously, Martin L. Friedland’s *The University of Toronto: A History* gives no mention of the group, despite its campus popularity and patriotic and infrastructure fundraising accomplishments throughout the three decades before the end of the Second World War.

Conversely, though there had been a comparable lack of attention given to Walterdale at the time I began this study, due in part to a dearth of scholarship on Edmonton and Alberta theatre generally, there has since emerged a body of work pertaining to Alberta and Edmonton theatre, and to Walterdale specifically. Anne Nothof’s *The Alberta Advantage: An Anthology of Plays* (2008) and edited collection of articles titled *Theatre in Alberta* (2008) both give passing mention to Walterdale’s influence, as does the Alberta Playwrights’ Network publication of brief biographies, *Theatre 100* (2006). As well, Nothof’s edited theme issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*, “Alberta Theatre” (fall 2008) includes Scott Sharplin’s article “Fifty Years of Walterdale,” while another issue of CTR, “Audiences,” includes my article which discusses the impact of audiences of nonprofessionalized theatre on theatre communities, with Walterdale as its case study. My own anthology of new plays produced at Walterdale, *Hot Thespian Action: Ten Premiere Plays from Walterdale Playhouse!* (2008), provides critical introductory material that considers Walterdale’s contributions to the production of new works. And, less a scholarly publication than an interview-based celebration, Walterdale Theatre Associates’ own *For Love Not Money* (2009, prepared by Edmonton-based writer Wayne Arthurson), creatively frames the company’s compelling anecdotes and seminal moments in the context of rehearsals for a 2007 production.
Thus, most of the material that does exist pertaining to these two companies is primary source material. I have relied heavily on two types: archived documents (meeting minutes, internal history documents, production history lists, newsletters, correspondence, play posters, programmes etc.) and print media (articles, previews, reviews, features and notices). These I retrieved mainly from stored documents housed at Alumnae Theatre, the University of Toronto Archives and Robarts Library, Walterdale Playhouse and the Provincial Archives of Alberta. (In the case of Walterdale I also made use of an interview I conducted with Mary and Frank Glenfield, two longtime, active members of the company.) The study uses the events and records gleaned from company and public media documents to reframe the two theatres within received local and national histories. By doing so, it not only brings to the surface two influential, yet otherwise critically ignored, companies but it also allows for new elements of the wider field of cultural production to emerge that necessarily effect, realign and reprioritize other elements in the whole of the field of production and the discipline of which it is a part.

Though the types of primary documents found at both theatres were similar, differences in their content have necessarily led to two types of histories being told. The Alumnae chapter relies heavily on press clippings and several brief (one to seven page) “history” documents produced by the company from time to time for reasons that included providing historical information to the media for anniversaries and preserving company heritage. With regards to the latter, “facts” had to be crosschecked because discrepancies occurred between these histories and because these histories, in part replicated from previous histories, were inconsistent with information found in other sources. Moreover, certain “periods” in Alumnae history yielded substantially greater documents than others due to inconsistent company recordkeeping and/or the fact that the University of Toronto Archives had methodically preserved all press clippings.
related to university events and issues, including those mentioning, in any detail at all, the Dramatic Club of the University College Alumnae Association up until the late 1930s. What I did not have access to during the time I was researching Alumnae were board meeting minutes or correspondence, both of which would have provided greater insight into internal policy and decision-making. The result of these circumstance is a social history of Alumnae, reflected at times off of scholarly sources pertaining to the company’s milieu, that at times yields insight into the ways in which the company performed and represented local and class-based “taste” within the field of cultural production. Conversely, at Walterdale I had access not only to saved press clippings but also board meeting minutes and correspondence between members and with outside organizations like Canadian Actors’ Equity Association and the City of Edmonton, all of which allowed for a comparatively more robust articulation of Walterdale’s self-positioning with and against the emerging Canadian theatre profession than could be gleaned, during the period of this study, at Alumnae. In other words, the documents that constitute this study do so not only by providing data for it, but also by shaping its possibilities and its present limitations.¹⁴

Indeed, notwithstanding recent influential efforts to illuminate the embodied and immediate presence of the performed event, the discourse of theatre practice remains awash in lasting documents. Season brochures, script drafts, budgets, grant applications, audition notices, signed contracts, contact lists, promptbooks, set designs, lighting plots, sound designs, rehearsal schedules, posters, handbills, PSAs, press releases, interview requests, event listings, preview articles, opening night thank you cards, media transcripts, radio and television copy, taped interviews, ticket stubs, review articles, video archives, production receipts, the occasional court subpoena, scholarly publications, lecture notes, folios, quartos, anthologies and internet blogs

¹⁴ For its part, Alumnae is presently seeking its board minutes, presumably still held at the private residences of board members and their families over the years.
have left two-and-a-half millennia’s worth of traces that constitute, in part, the discourse of theatre. This is why Michael McKinnie can state without reservation that, “As with any mode of production, theatrical production requires that its labour processes be organized and administered” (82).

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault proposes that the job of the historian is not to search for hidden truths across sweeping historical periods, but to question and reconstruct the ways in which discourses emerge. To do this, the historian must reconstruct the ways in which constitutive elements emerge, define each other, define the discourses they form and define the discourses that form them. Transformation, not tradition, becomes the focus of historical analysis. The historian now rethinks what is already familiar, reconceives discontinuity, renounces the search for “a secret origin” and asks, “What is a theory? What is a concept? What is a text?” The search for hidden truths is replaced by “a pure description of discursive events” (emphasis in original).

Discourses are bounded institutionalized ways of thinking. Foucault warns that frequently they are dealt with in terms of tradition, influence, development and evolution and a spirit or “community of meanings” between phenomena (*Foucault Archaeology* 21-22). He considers a variety of discourses, including natural history, the science of living beings, clinical medicine, psychiatry, grammar and economics; though he omits it, we may also include theatre practice among these (as does Kershaw in *Politics* and *Radical*). A discourse forms out of an interacting hierarchy of elements, or “the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them” (*Foucault Archaeology* 15).

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15 The advent of email has done little to mitigate such documentation, though in certain ways it has complicated its analysis.

16 Foucault provides his formulation of discourse analysis in *Archaeology* (see in particular 3-5, 25-27).
Thus, “When one describes the formation of the objects of a discourse, one tries to locate the relations that characterize a discursive practice” (Foucault *Archaeology* 48). Too frequently, nonprofessionalized practices are omitted from institutionalized discourse, or included only in terms of early, foundational objects that eventually lose relevance in professionalizing hierarchies. Professional discourses (such as those that professional scholars construct) omitted nonprofessionalized objects of study by way of an implicit collusion of professional interests.

This condition is made possible by the arrangement of a discourse’s constitutive elements. According to Foucault, five elements constitute a discourse. “Statements” are all that is written or said; they collectively refer to the space in which an object emerges and transforms and include the documents listed above. “Objects” are types of people and classes of behaviour; they are arranged by type (in “grids of specification”) and include actors, directors, producers, general managers, agents, consumers, critics and scholars, as well as enthusiasts, “divas” and “transgressors.” The time and space at which objects emerge in the discourse is of prime importance to the historian. “Enunciative modalities” are positions from which subjects speak; they include positions derived from one’s affiliation with a regional theatre, theatre collective, academia, the state, private business, a union or an audience. “Concepts” are logical organizations of the field of statements that traceably change over time as organizational practices change; they include: acting troupe / theatre collective / ensemble / company; also folio / libretto / book / script; also retelling / translation / adaptation / recreation; and also genres such as naturalism, futurism, realism, devised theatre and collective creation. “Strategies” (“theoretical structures” or “themes”) include wider perspectives on concepts in the discipline; for example, gender, postcolonial, intercultural or performance studies.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^\text{17}\) On the formation and structure of discursive elements see Foucault, *Archaeology* 31-76.
All elements in a discourse align dialogically and dynamically such that over time, as the alignment of each element transforms, the transformation affects all other elements. No two temporal moments in the discourse are the same and no two relations between elements are the same. The meaning of each element and the practice of the discourse transform continuously because the discourse is a practice and not a static sign (Foucault *Archaeology* 49). The ways in and degrees to which each element interacts with every other element are determined neither internally nor externally of the discourse but “at the limits of discourse” (Foucault *Archaeology* 46). They are realized and authorized by institutions, established techniques, social groups, perceptual organizations, demographic pressures, forms of public assistance, state and private funding mechanisms and relations between other discourses. Discourse analysis is concerned with discursive practice, or how an object finds its place of privilege in a discourse and its relations to other objects, and by what authority these occur (Foucault *Archaeology* 44).

A defining factor in determining the formation of a discourse is the extent to which one can show, across time and elemental diversity, that a system’s various strategies derive “from the same set of relations” (Foucault *Archaeology* 68). For example, as a discourse, theatre practice could form an Ancient Greek dithyramb, a Renaissance comedy or an international devised performance. Its component elements regulate and associate with one another such that one could show how providing a complimentary ticket to a known theatre critic (social capital) could translate into higher ticket sales and generate revenue for a theatre company (economic capital); how increased revenue will allow a company to add an educational component to a theatre season (educational capital) which, in turn, could generate future government funding (economic capital); how added government funding interest could increase the renown of the theatre (institutionalized cultural capital), its plays (objectified cultural capital) and its artistic director
(embodied cultural capital; social capital); and how the augmentation of the prestige of the theatre and its elements can reposition its forms of practice (collective creation, professional association-disciplined) throughout the hierarchy of concepts in the field of discourse. In this way, as Paul DiMaggio has done, one might show that in the first half of the twentieth century, opera, drama and dance “were annexed to the high culture system in the United States” (DiMaggio 21); or as Baz Kershaw has done, one might show that theatre as both a “disciplinary system” and a “system of cultural production” trains audiences along class, gender and generational lines and spatially indoctrinates consumers into “pleasurable submission” (Kershaw Radical 31-32).  

But determining the location of nonprofessionalized practice within the discursive field of theatre is problematic. The practices of professional theatre and nonprofessionalized theatre are each treated in certain ways by constitutive subject-agents because of the ways in which institutions, social groups, demographic pressures, etc. realize and legitimize them. The question of the placement of each within the discourse determines its relative legitimacy. For example, if each of the two practices is defined as a concept in the overall discourse of theatre, then it functions with a certain degree of autonomy, at least for a time, until the other acts upon it, or vice versa. There would also be the presumption in this case that as a concept, the practice may by reorganized into another concept over time; thus: patron-supported / amateur / nonprofessionalized / community theatre / pro-am hybrid / professional. Alternately, if each is defined as a strategy, then it functions again with relative autonomy but not as a form of practice but rather as a mode of study; thus: studies in the professional theatre or studies in pro-am hybrid theatre. However, if professional theatre practice is situated as the discourse itself, effectively

18 For an analogous breakdown of the discourse of the “Analysis of Wealth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” see Foucault Archaeology 68-9.
relegating nonprofessionalized practice to another discourse (such as that of leisure activities or community involvement), then the hierarchical relationship between the two terms will be markedly different. For one, their relative positions will determine the extent to which each is a necessary precondition of the practice of theatre at given times in different cultures. This study views the two as dynamic concepts within the discursive field of theatre in order to examine the motivations and authorities of implicated agents in the positioning of nonprofessionalized practice. Along the way, it will be useful to consider whether or not there is an active need for a practice within the field of theatre to fulfill the “othered” space that nonprofessionalized practice fills.

**Taste and Consumption: The Canonization of Theatre Production**

Speaking in 1973 of the influence that professional adjudicators had over competing practitioners at the DDF competitions, Robertson Davies wrote,

> When we recall the complete sway that these adjudicators exercised over the taste of so many otherwise independent people—an influence which varied little whether the adjudicator was plainly a man of great attainment or demonstrably a mountebank—we wonder why it was considered such very bad taste to adjudicate the adjudicator. (Davies in Lee x)

Beyond crowning a Bessborough or Calvert Trophy winner, the DDF re-presented annually the influence of legitimated specialists “over the taste of otherwise independent” and, by inference, less legitimated theatre practitioners. The footfalls of the DDF’s “decline” trace the Canadian public’s declining tolerance for amateur practice during professionalization. The DDF was not simply an annual competition between qualified amateur groups for a national theatre trophy; it was a federally sanctioned, and very public, dialogue over aesthetics that each year tested the
liminal space between amateur and professional by performing on local and national stages, in
newspaper columns, and in radio and television clips, the nation’s prevailing theatre “taste.”

All areas of culture, according to Pierre Bourdieu, play out struggles for domination
predicated on “taste.” One’s taste for theatre, film, television, music, literature and photography,
as well as fashion, cooking and painting is not based on subjective choices so much as it is based
on empirically observable social constructions produced by one’s family background, education,
occupation and income. The hierarchies created by taste—“the faculty of immediately and
intuitively judging aesthetic values” (Bourdieu *Distinction* 99)—and lifestyle form “coherent
systems” of culture (Bourdieu *Distinction* xiii) which appear natural in everyday practice.

Socially constituted taste is the tool with which competition for audiences is fought.
Bourdieu shows that “art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and
deliberately, or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social difference” (Bourdieu
*Distinction* 7). Taste determines which sorts of theatre practitioners may produce and audiences
may attend, including the perceived degree of professionalization each is willing to accept. Thus,
in 1962 in his *Edmonton Journal* arts column, Desmond Bill compared the four-year-old
nonprofessionalized group Edmonton Theatre Associates (TA) to Edmonton’s seven-year-old
professional touring house:

> Even the most ardent theatre-goers found it hard last season to regard a TA
> production in Walterdale in the same way they would look at one in the Jubilee
> Auditorium.
> You may say no one should expect a visit to the Playhouse to be as
> exciting as a visit to the auditorium. Or you might not think a visit to the
> auditorium to see a show is exciting. (Bill *Journal*)

Differences between the productions presented at each theatre were, for Bill, obvious and
systemic. Each theatre’s season was to be read in a different context as determined, in significant
part, by the degree of professionalization and the inference that it had a direct impact on, and was constitutive of, audience reception and aesthetic value—that is, taste.

The practitioner and the spectator are complicit in the canonization of professional practice. Bourdieu problematizes the concept of free choice in the context of cultural production and consumption. The spectator’s encounter with an artwork is not a love-at-first-sight relationship, but a cognitive act of decoding that implies that a “cultural code” is at play (Bourdieu *Distinction* 3). Art refers not to a “reality” but to “the universe of past and present works of art” (Bourdieu *Distinction* 3). The spectator’s aesthetic “eye” and her “pure gaze” are not natural but are products of “history reproduced by education” (Bourdieu *Distinction* 4). “Mastery” of perception is acquired through contact with art and the pure gaze is a luxury of the bourgeois “life of ease” (Bourdieu *Distinction* 4-5), which explains why it is generally the wealthiest factions of society who have the time and the money to attend theatre. Educational institutions, responsible for training spectators, “allocate” certain works to the “academic canon” and “less legitimate works” to “avant-garde literature” (Bourdieu *Distinction* 26). An individual’s tastes tend to lead her to cultural goods, such as theatre performances, relative to her position and assisted by critics whom she has grown accustomed to trusting (Bourdieu *Distinction* 232). For the dominant middle class, choice is spurred on by the competition for luxury goods (Bourdieu *Distinction* 232). In this context, art producers, particularly in the theatre, become occupied with their struggle with other producers. It is the conflict between interested parties in the field of cultural production that determines the influences and outcomes of taste.
Amateurs in the Field: The Pro-Am Practitioner and the Continuum Model

In his 1904 essay “The Amateur Spirit,” Bliss Perry considered the difference between professional and amateur not as one of formal discursive designation, but one of attitude toward a practice:

The amateur, we are accustomed to say, works for love, and not for money. He cultivates an art or a sport, a study or an employment, because of his taste for it; he is attached to it, not because it gives him a living, but because it ministers to his life. (Perry 4)

At the turn of the twentieth century, Perry saw hope for Americans in “our modern world” only if the skills of the professional were to be combined in practice with the “zest and enthusiasm of the amateur” (Perry vii). Competition is the hallmark of professionalized fields, where “It is imagined that there is a list, at the head of which is the best player, with the rest below him in descending scale of efficiency”; the one at the head must keep on winning (Perry 6). But amateur practices such as yachting and fishing require comparable “thoroughness, energy, and practical skill” (Perry 11). Perry cites “amateur philanthropy” as one particularly influential amateur practice in the “modern community” (Perry 10-11). But he also paints a portrait of the practicing amateur as one who displays undesirable “amateurish qualities”:

He is unskilful because untrained; desultory because incessant devotion to his hobby is both unnecessary and wearisome; ineffective because, after all, it is not a vital matter whether he succeed or fail. The amateur actor is usually interesting, at times delightful, and even, as in the case of Dickens, powerful; his performance gives pleasure to his friends; but nevertheless, the professional, who must act well or starve, acts very much better. In a country where there is a great leisure class […] , amateurism is sure to flourish. (Perry 11)

Thus the professional actor’s talent, to an influential extent, is the product of effort born of economic necessity and thus of a competitive environment. In contrast, the amateur may flourish among the leisure class, which exists outside of the cultural space of competition.
A “realization of the distinction” between the two designations is itself an important defining activity, personally and nationally (Perry 13). Indeed, Perry links the amateur spirit to something akin to the American frontier tradition:

For the amateur surely has his charm, and he has his virtues,—virtues that have nowhere wrought more happily for him than here upon American soil. Versatility, enthusiasm, freshness of spirit, initiative, a fine recklessness of tradition and precedent, a faculty for cutting across lots,—these are the qualities of the American pioneer. (Perry 13-14)

These, he says, are also the qualities of a young artist who may be glorified for holding them at the outset of his career (Perry 18). But if, after a time, his “freshness of spirit” turns into a desultory “incessant devotion” without the artist having professionalized his practice, the desirable elements of the amateur spirit will have turned undesirable. At some point, it is expected that the amateur will “challenge” the professional to “learn his relative rank” within the field (Perry 21). In other words, the amateur ought to professionalize his own practice for the sake of social utility.

Perry links amateur practice to both experiment and tradition. Thus, in America amateur practice is analogous to a humanistic “tradition of experiment” where the nation gains strength from historicizing the repeated practice of the New. Conversely, amateur practice is also the practice of the “experiment of tradition” where a culture plays back to itself its own histories, or the histories of other cultures as with Cochrane’s Depression-era Welsh theatre where local populations represent foreign works onstage but in their own language. It is this amateur spirit that was taken up by the early Little Theatre Movements in North America and, later, federal cultural policy makers such as Robertson Davies and Vincent Massey in Canada, who intended to spark domestic activity from the burning embers of a foreign theatre heritage.
Among the professional’s chief traits, observes Perry, is the ability to assess the “bearing” of all that comprises his profession: a book, a new fact or the experience of his predecessors (Perry 23, 27). This is particularly important in light of “Modern competitive conditions” (Perry 23). The professional, then, earns his title in part because he can place his own work, the work of others and all cultural objects that comprise the discourse in their proper, competitively determined, positions.

This ability to determine one’s *prise de position*, as Bourdieu describes it, is vital to locating one’s work in the field of cultural production. Terms such as “professional” and “amateur” are routinely applied for this purpose, but like all terms their static usage risks obsolescence. As cultural conditions change, so too must the terminology. For all of their value in designating particular areas of the field of artistic production as eligible for state sponsorship, defining criteria can be reductive in that they do not represent the wider spectrum of activity. At their worst they give the impression of a field that is far more limited (and limiting) than the range of observable artistic practice indicates (e.g. solely state-funded or solely Equity-supported practices, for example). Insomuch as individuals view the field *in totum, via* state and/or union criteria, in order to legitimize certain practices above others, blindspots frequently develop where nonprofessionalized practice is delegitimized while professional practice is obscured among universalizing, yet contradictory, definitions.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Perry saw specialization and “the professional spirit” (Perry 27) as a necessary product of modernization, but one that required scrutiny. It had not been “carried too far” yet (Perry 26), but the potential was there, and the amateur spirit might go some distance in reining it in for the sake of a society set to become “a nation of professionals” (Perry 28). Moral ideals must accompany commercial dominance, and
personal enthusiasm, the individual initiative, the boundless zest, of the American amateur must penetrate, illuminate, idealize the brute force, the irresistible on-sweeping mass, of our vast industrial democracy.[…]

There are already here and there amateurs without amateurishness, professionals untainted by professionalism. [T]his union of strict professional training with that free outlook upon life, that human curiosity and eagerness, which are the best endowment of the amateur. (Perry 31)

A mixture of both, the professional-amateur practitioner sees her work as a passion, not simply a labour. Thus she prevents her designation of “professional” from being an empty signifier pleading for special acknowledgment in the name of subjective quality and at the expense of quality of life. In all, Perry’s writing, in the heat of industrial modernization, warned that the “pure” professional was not the ideal toward which one ought to aspire. He believed that one should aim for a combination of professional and amateur traits in one’s work.

Hutchison and Feist’s 1991 study for the UK’s Policy Studies Institute reviews amateur participation in the arts. It concludes that “rather than a clear amateur/professional divide, there is a complex professional-amateur spectrum of ambition, accomplishment and activity” (Hutchison and Feist xiii). This spectrum, they argue, is more in line with the “forever changing” “social and economic bases of arts activity” (Hutchison and Feist 9). Thus, they offer sub-spectra for eight signifying elements of artistic practice along which any artist’s professional or amateur designation may be measured. These are: income from arts employment (negative / all), training (self / fully professional), artistic aspirations (unimportant / high), time allocated (hobby / full-time), status of art form in society (not serious / considered a professional occupation), experience (limited / considerable), content and style (derivative / original) and general approach (recreational / creative/business-like) (Hutchison and Feist 10). They note that any “serious practitioner” can be placed somewhere along this continuum and that this placement changes throughout her life (Hutchison and Feist 9). The Hutchison and Feist spectrum provides a useful
perspective from which theatre practice can be studied because it frees the investigator from the inherited terminology that traps the discourse in a qualifying professional/amateur binary.

Thus it is not only professional practitioners who position their work in the field of cultural production. Josef Skála, president of British Columbia’s Czech amateur theatre company Theatre Around the Corner, describes his company in the following terms:

Financial reward (not the artistic merit) should in fact be the only definitive distinction between a professional and an amateur artist. An enthusiastic amateur has no excuse to short-change his or her effort whereas financial considerations may sometimes cause a professional to do an uninspiring work. We have to remember, however, that the quantity of stage work and therefore the amount of accumulated experience in theatrical crafts is immeasurably smaller for a vast majority of amateurs than for the “seasoned” professionals. It is precisely this difference, which usually denigrates amateur companies to be only “poor relatives” in the eyes of the theatre community at large. Experts seem to forget that it is not only possible, but sometimes greatly advantageous, to utilize such lack of schooling and experience of amateur actors for inventive casting which results in deeply moving performances. (Skála)

For Skála, as in the Hutchison and Feist model, financial reward, experience and the valuation of the community at large are three signifying features of theatre practice that vary depending on the practice. Moreover, he rejects the presumption that professionalized practice is the only practice, or the only relevant practice.

In “The Pro-Am Revolution,” Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller describe grey-zone practitioners, making up about fifty per cent of their UK survey group (Leadbeater and Miller 30), who would not consider their leisure-time work a career, yet engage in it frequently, with at least “reasonably good” skill and to professional standards:

Pro-Ams are unlikely to earn more than a small portion of their income from their pastime but they pursue it with the dedication and commitment associated with a professional. For Pro-Ams, leisure is not passive consumerism but active and participatory; it involves the deployment of publicly accredited knowledge and skills, often built up over a long career, which has involved sacrifices and frustrations. (Leadbeater and Miller 20)
As a “new social hybrid” (Leadbeater and Miller 20), pro-ams do not fit neatly into traditional production-consumption models because their labour, time and cultural capital are not exchanged for economic capital. They engage in activities with a degree of investment that is not to be taken lightly. The “Pro-Am ethic,” as Leadbeater and Miller call it, not only involves the amateur’s amare but, frequently, substantial training, risk-taking, time and money. Pro-am activity often requires social organization in five aspects: training and rehearsal, accreditation (including auditioning), peer recognition (including performances), social bonding and the transmission of members’ views into the wider community and society (Leadbeater and Miller 44). Instructors and peers bestow “layers of technique” upon the pro-am that are not rapidly acquired, and complex “social organization” is frequently needed to pass on and perform one’s skills (Leadbeater and Miller 39). Moreover, pro-ams pass on their knowledge to others as instructors themselves, to accumulate not economic capital but cultural and social capital. This capital is ultimately of the same weight or greater as that accumulated through professional work because it is derived from the choice to pursue personal pleasure, a choice that cannot at any point be taken lightly considering the personal investment. Leadbeater and Miller note that by acquiring cultural capital through their work, pro-ams gain “horizontal mobility” (as opposed to income- and wealth-influenced vertical mobility) which creates a “more fluid and open” society and thus a greater sense of belonging (Leadbeater and Miller 42). For this reason and others, including longer life expectancies and growing levels of education, Leadbeater and Miller argue that while pro-am culture will grow without state intervention, state policies should avoid stifling its growth (Leadbeater and Miller 57). Indeed, it thrives in “an open, liberal, well-educated, affluent and democratic society, in which people have enough time outside work and the resources they need

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19 In their UK survey, Leadbeater and Miller found that “amateur dramatics” ranked low (1% regular participation) among pro-am pursuits in the UK (gardening ranked highest) (32).
to cultivate their Pro-Am activities” (Leadbeater and Miller 57). But the demographics of participation are telling. They note that “affluent people are more likely to participate in Pro-Am activities than those on low incomes” (Leadbeater and Miller 60), and those who are exposed to culture at an early age “are more likely to build their cultural capital in later life” (Leadbeater and Miller 62).
Chapter 2
“Non/Professionalized”:
Framing the Divide

“What I love about amateur theatricals,” said Solly to Miss Rich, “is the way everything is done by jollying everybody. You must miss that dreadfully in the professional theatre. Just a dull round of people giving orders and people obeying them; no jollying.”

“You are quite mistaken,” she replied; “there is really quite a lot of jollying to be done, though perhaps not quite so much as with amateurs.”

“Solly, if you say amateur theatricals again I shall hit you,” said Mrs. Forrester; “thank Heaven the Little Theatre left all that nonsense behind years ago. In fact, it may be said that we have a truly professional approach. Haven’t we, Walter?”

“Quite,” said the economical Vambrace.

“I’m sure it may be said, but is it true?” said Solly.

— Robertson Davies, *Tempest-Tost* 19

The theatre divides its public and divides itself.

— Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* 19

Professionalization and Its Impulses

The amateur’s declining fortunes in the last century were linked to the rise of the traditional professional practices, including law, medicine, the military, teaching and academia, each encouraged by state incentives, legal protections and the formation of professional unions and associations. These “modern professions” are defined as such on the grounds that they are “groups of formally trained experts whose members acquire material reward and social prestige on the basis of the value which society bestows, or is persuaded to bestow, upon their specialized knowledge” (Frame 1025). With a growing emphasis on specialist skills applied for fair compensation, and a growing desire to separate labour from leisure, “the democratization of the
professional ideal,” as historian Murray Frame has termed it (Frame 1053), came to be deeply entrenched in the psyche of industrialized and industrializing nations (see Goode 34). Thus, as Claire Cochrane puts it, there was “a semantic shift in the deployment of the word ‘amateur.’ ‘Professional’ now carries with it connotations of ultra-competence. The amateur is non-professional and by implication incompetent” (Cochrane “Pervasiveness” 233-34).

During the twentieth century, the terms “professional” and “amateur” gained increasing emotional resonance: one as a designation to be proud of, the other as one to be rejected. The amateur’s (relative) lack of formalized, accredited training meant that his practice was inferior. The word “professional” legitimizes the practice of part of a field of production at the same time that it delegitimizes other segments of the field. It carves a space within which the practice is visibly regulated with internal codes and is legitimized by private and state recognition. It presents the illusion that nonprofessional practices, no matter how closely they resemble it, are haphazard and illegitimate. It constitutes a collection of practices and products that hold greater cultural value and symbolic capital than nonprofessional practices and products. It infers and confers higher “taste” on one practice over another. The cultural positioning of “amateur” shifted as “professional” became synonymous with acquired skill and proven ability, while amateur came to be seen as the antithesis of these. Thus, to understand the place of contemporary amateur practice we must first consider the place of professional practice today.

Today the distinction of “professional” is desirable. It evokes both a sense of earned elite status above all others and “communal identity” among members (Bell and Newby; McMillan and Chavis; Goode). The modern professions follow rigid socialization practices (examinations, reprimands, apprenticeships) before entrance is allowed, and they maintain strict control
practices (malpractice, disbarment) in order to maintain “quality,” to discipline their membership and, as state apparatuses, to police the wider society with which they deal.

Professional practitioners themselves define the term and its applications variously. For example, Sholem Dolgoy cites his interview with Canadian actor Douglas Campbell and the latter’s position that it is not an association designation that defines one as professional or not, but rather the “effort an actor puts into continually improving the quality of [his or her] work” (Dolgoy 21). But more thorough definitions are available as well. Professionalization, defined as “the process by which occupational groups bid for [professional] status by articulating a common identity on the basis of their expertise” (Frame 1025-26), arises from various conditions that differ from one occupation to the next. Practitioners in a field, who normally have already accumulated high economic and social capital, seek to professionalize for a variety of reasons. Frame argues that these reasons can be charted between two poles: altruistic public service and self-serving market protection (Frame 1027). This continuum model acknowledges that professions are “complex multi-purpose organizations” that function variously to promote occupational groups’ often disparate interests, fix fees, determine acceptable qualifications to allow membership, control access to the profession, certify quality within the practice, regulate internal mobility, regulate working conditions and ward off the harmful effects of commercialism, while at the same time “establish[ing] a service monopoly” to “manipulate the market” (Frame 1027). Professions function as “regulatory associations” that normally hold “national congresses” to organize those practitioners who are “members of a profession” (Frame 1031). Professions operate like “trade unions” insofar as they attend to the “material interests” of their members, and operate like “professional associations” insofar as they “self-regulate”
Their constitutive members frequently claim a monopoly on skills and enjoy a higher level of prestige in society at large (Goode 155).

In the case of theatre practice, historically, professionalization has been more problematic than it has for the traditional professions. This is the case for a number of reasons. First, because the practitioners normally have not already accrued high cultural capital but rather seek to alleviate their material impoverishment, their ability to organize has traditionally required the (ambivalent) aid of the government. Second, unlike the traditional professions its practitioners need not possess “formal credentials” (Frame 1030) or even “a clearly defined corpus of knowledge” (Frame 1045) to practice; thus, the question of the quality and quantity of training and of product is repeatedly brought to the fore, with ramifications for who is and who is not allowed to be recognized as a professional. Third, because the question of the discipline’s use-value to society has historically haunted the art form (as it has all art forms) theatre professions have struggled internally to define the boundary between professional and nonprofessional practice and therefore to prove externally that they should be taken seriously as a profession by society at large. Fourth, the degree to which the work of those who are not members of the professional association is to hold status in society, and conversely the degree to which the professional association is to advocate for practicing nonmembers, has always been a matter for debate with a view to the health of the wider practice. Fifth, the degree to which theatre is a valuable tool for education, and even government propaganda, has frequently determined the degree to which its practitioners are recognized as professionals (Frame 1041). Sixth, whereas the traditional professions can presume a degree of predictable and continuous interaction with potential clientele, professional theatre practitioners can ill afford to assume they will always

20 Frame borrows the distinction between trade unions and professional associations from A.M. Carr-Saunders and P.A. Wilson’s *The Professions*. 
have audiences; this is partly a result of their reluctance, in some segments of the field at least, to “defer too much to audience taste” (Frame 1042)—that is, to commercialize—due to artistic tendencies toward experimentation. In general, these tensions are the result of the fact that theatre is more an art than a service occupation. They also reflect a tension between “the new” in artistic practice and the stasis-effect of the bureaucratic stratification of professionalized practice.

Though the present study focuses on theatre in a Canadian context, striking similarities can be found between Canadian theatrical professionalization and that of other, apparently dissimilar, milieus. As Frame has shown in the case of theatre in late-nineteenth-century Russia, audiences grew with the “demand for leisure pursuits” and the “commercialization of culture” (Frame 1032-33). With this growth, the number of theatre practitioners in provincial and urban areas grew rapidly in a climate that increasingly favoured the founding of social aid boards and associations. Theatre practitioners wanted to professionalize in order to attract state funding, which was seen to be preferable to that of market-savvy entrepreneurial impresarios, by raising the cultural capital associated with their work. With the establishment of the Russian Theatre Society in 1894, one of the first professional theatre associations in the world,21 congresses were organized, pensions were regulated, staff were appointed, dramatist rights were represented, financial assistance was offered to practitioners, new private theatres were assisted, a central bureau was opened and a periodical was published (Frame 1036). As a result, “a collective occupational identity” was established (Frame 1039) and members “increasingly spoke the language of a profession” (Frame 1052). State funding was received happily in return for a degree of arms-length monitoring, with the benefit of added cultural capital associated with state-

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21 Frame points to the Union of German Theatre People (1871) as the first professional theatre association (fn. 58 1040). The US’s Actors’ Equity Association appeared in 1913 and British Equity in 1929. The Canadian Actors’ Equity Association officially achieved independence in 1976, though its members had been operating under the auspices of US Equity since 1954.
approved support (Frame 1047-49). And because the Russian empire, like Canada’s constitutional monarchy nearly a century later, accounted for a vast geographical territory where artists frequently practiced far from urban centres, organizing the discipline was cumbersome, even with state assistance.

Indeed, the study of the outset of an occupation’s professionalization can reveal much about the value a society holds for the occupation and its specialists at that moment in time. For example, is it possible for an occupation, particularly an artistic one, to professionalize too early, or in the wrong way? During the early stages of Anglo-Canadian theatre’s professionalization, prominent commentators such as Robertson Davies warned of a practice that might professionalize by taking “short-cuts” instead of taking “the time to learn not only its own business, but the special tastes and needs of our people” (Davies “Dialogue” 385). Davies also feared the negative influence of the bureaucracy involved with government funding and warned that it could become “a pension scheme for the artistically worn out, the incompetent and the faddists” (Davies “Dialogue” 385). Eight years later, Robert Fulford criticized a practice that he believed was professionalizing too early. Writing in 1959, Fulford argued:

The Canadian yearning for professionalism, hopeless from the start, prevents the birth of a theatre with the energy and the nerve to produce foreign plays of some meaning to the audience. But it has an even more serious effect on the writing of Canadian plays. Indeed, I think it almost eliminates the possibility of serious writing for the theatre in this country. (Fulford 84)

As an example, Fulford cites the case of Toronto’s Crest Theatre and its production of *Ride a Pink Horse*, where “Neither the script nor the production was ready for the public” (Fulford 84). When applied to fields of artistic production, the term “professional” and its values are matters of vociferous debate. This is due, in part, to the perpetually shifting place of the artist and his or her art within a market economy, and to the slippery indicator, “talent.”
A decade later, as Actors’ Equity’s brand of professionalization took national root in Canada, the problem for practitioners of adopting the term “professional” was particularly acute. For one, collusion between Equity and the Canada Council effectively nationalized professionalization and, in part, led to scuttling the amateur flagship Dominion Drama Festival. Concurrently, and separate from the Canada Council, the federal government’s Local Initiative Projects (LIP), which was intended to spark localized employment, was both aiding and problematizing these professionalizing efforts. Explains Peter Hay,

The profession was reacting (and in some cases, still is) to a major attack on the definition of its “professionalism,” since under LIP anybody receiving a salary, regardless of training, talent or other qualifications, could and did call himself a professional.[…] The reaction was also caused by a justified insecurity on the part of the profession about the ambiguities of its own professionalism. As I pointed out in an article at the time, one sometimes feels in Canada that the only difference between amateurs and professionals is money. (Hay 11)

Is earning a salary enough to call oneself “professional”? If not, does this mean you are a “paid amateur,” or “semi-professional”? And was either term appropriate for describing more than just participation in a single production? What about a season of work? What about a career? There was anxiety over these labels at the mutual levels of individual practitioners, companies, communities and the nation. These questions of position, position-taking and appropriate vocabulary were highly fraught, particularly because they communicated the defining terms from which the field and its constitutive parts could function in and among each other.

Decades earlier, at the turn of the twentieth century, American philosopher Bliss Perry also took pains to warn of the dangers for a culture that professionalizes with abandon. While the amateur “touches life on many sides,” the professional “is apt to approach life from one side only” (Perry 24). Indeed, the specialized professional may be overdeveloped in one direction, atrophied in all others. His expertness, his professional functioning, so to speak, is of indisputable value to society, but he
himself remains an unsocial member of the body politic. He has become a machine. [A] loss of sympathy, of imagination, of free and varied activity, soon insulates the individual, and lessens his usefulness as a member of society. [W]e can afford to be human. [P]ersonality is the mistress of the house. Method must be taught to know her station. (Perry 25)

Moreover, Perry argued that we must “free ourselves from some of the grosser faults of the mere professional”: his “provinciality and selfishness” and, in particularly, his “cupidity,” “his clannish loyalty to his own department only,” his indifferences, his lack of imagination and his predilection to ask, “What is there in this for me?” Instead, a “breath of the spirit of the amateur, the amator,” would afford a degree of “fairness” and esprit de vivre in the work and life of the professional (Perry 29-30). Perry believed it important for the professional to include a little of the “amateur spirit” in his attitude toward his work.  

Discipline and Exclude

Professions discipline their component elements. Professionalization is a form of disciplinarization and the field of theatre bears a history of disciplining its varied practices by professionalizing over time. As a dynamic practice, a discourse’s component elements interact and consequently legitimize or delegitimize each other. They do this with encoded processes of power. According to Foucault, like all systems of power, disciplines order human subjects; but

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22 In contemporary counterpoint, Leadbeater and Miller record UK Pro-Am actor Alison Maguire:

> If you are with professional actors there are only three subjects of conversation. First, why your agent is no good. Second, what you are in next. Third, who else you know in the industry. Well, as an aspirant actor new to the professional game I did not have much to say on those subjects, so conversation became rather stilted. Professional actors may be great on stage but fundamentally they are dull. Amateur actors on the other hand have a life and they have something to say about the world outside the theatre. (50)

Taken in context with Perry’s views a century earlier, Maguire’s statement moves from cynicism to the fulfillment of a twentieth-century condition.
they do so with three underlying objectives: to minimize costs (economic and political), to intensify and expand their power “as far as possible” and to link themselves to state apparatuses (trade union, politico-legal, cultural, educational, industrial, family, media). By ordering human beings in these ways they fix populations (“an anti-nomadic technique”), “calculate distributions” of populations and “neutralize the effects of counter-power” that resist it. They develop “timetables, collective training, exercises [and other forms of] total and detailed surveillance” to take advantage of increasing populations and to “extract from bodies the maximum time and force” required to discipline them (see Foucault *Discipline* 218-21).

Thus, during the period of England’s modern theatrical professionalization key milestones, and their disciplinary elements, are evident. The implementation of the Theatres Act (1843) removed the legal effect of separating the “legitimate stage” from opera, burletta, melodrama and ballet. This politico-legal move allowed both major and minor theatre houses to stage a wider array of fare and had the effect of making the practice available to a wider population. Access spread further through the end of the nineteenth century as theatre practice increasingly involved people from outside of “theatre families” to include businesspeople and royalty. Actor training programs offered through RADA (1904- ), the central schools (1906- ) and the London University Diploma (1920s- ) linked theatre practice to educational and state apparatuses, fixed hubs of training in specific geographic centres, served to neutralize competition by segregating those with conferred “legitimate” training from those without and allowed educational and state systems to better select, monitor, organize, regulate and confirm—that is, to discipline—the practice’s “apprentice” sector (indeed, the practice now had a population it could call a “sector”). And as historian Michael Sanderson argues, it also now had “a coherent body of learned knowledge [which] increased its professional quality” (Sanderson
This specialized knowledge was identifiable and therefore reproducible, but only by legitimized producers. The establishment of the British Actors’ Equity Association (1929–) more efficiently defined, centralized and legitimized a wide segment of the profession by incorporating it into a “trade union” (and thus an identifiable cultural voice to the public and the state). It also regulated the distribution of its members, gave them politico-legal status and regulated them via member-sanctioned punishments and restricted entry. Explains Sanderson,

An occupation continually flooded by casual outsiders without qualifications finds it difficult to be taken seriously as a profession or as any kind of career at all. So it was with acting prior to the 1930s. An important part of the move towards professionalization was the exclusion of the amateur and the enforcement of the closed shop in the West End and subsequently in the provinces. Reinforced by present-day mechanisms such as the Casting Agreements and the limitations of annual Equity cards, the closed shop is a vital means of checking the potentially soaring numbers of entrants who would completely debauch any claims to professionalization in even worse employment and poverty. (Sanderson 4)

By disciplining their field in England, theatre professionals admitted and omitted fellow practitioners with clear purpose. The “closed shop” took the keys to the factory from the “casual outsiders,” as it were. And by linking themselves to state apparatuses, accredited member-professionals began to receive acknowledgement in other fields by gaining employment as university professors, gaining admission to the Order of Merit23 and finding paid work by excluding nonmembers from working for acknowledged professional theatre producers. These are the elements of Kershaw’s “theatre estate” as “disciplinary marketplace,” a “social engine that helps to drive an unfair system of privilege” (Kershaw Radical 31), one that is unfair not only to the audience as “arts consumer” (Kershaw Radical 44), but also to segments of the population whose own practice is systematically delegitimated.

23 British theatre practitioners admitted to the Order of Merit are Baron Olivier (1981), Sir John Gielgud (1996) and Sir Tom Stoppard (2000).
Despite widespread efforts to professionalize a range of cultural practices, beyond theatre, practicing amateurs have thrived, sometimes in resistance to, and other times in concert with, professionals. Thus, whereas early rap artists offered counter-culture resistance to a highly professionalized music industry, “pro-am” software developers and amateur astronomers frequently partnered with professionals in their field for mutual and social benefit. Insomuch as nonprofessionalized practice refers to that which is practiced by non-specialists, it is ostensibly available to everyone willing to practice it where it is possible to do so. It is by definition an “open shop” where everyone may enter, though in certain cases—such as some amateur sports—it is not possible for everyone to compete at a high level.

**Pariah in the Discourse: The Practising Amateur and the Field of Theatre**

Part of this study seeks to develop a productive vocabulary within which the practitioners and practices at nonprofessionalized theatres may be discussed. In certain cases, this vocabulary is oppositional to the practice of professional theatre and its commercialized and ghettoizing

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24 Chris Anderson, following popular science writer Timothy Ferris, goes so far as to cite the date 23 February 1987 as the “arrival of the ‘Pro-Am’ era” because this was the date that amateur astronomers assisted professionals in recording the moment when a star went supernova, something that could only have been done by people at certain telescopes around the world at certain times (Long 60). Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller list rap music, Linux and *The Sims* as influential products of “the Pro-Am Revolution” (9). They define “Pro-Am” practitioners as “innovative, committed and networked amateurs working to professional standards” (9) but who do it “mainly for the love of it” (20). Leadbeater and Miller go on to cite the fact that “Professionals create a distribution bottleneck” for medical, financial and educational advances made by pro-ams in the developing world (11) and say that increasingly, professionals hold an “endangered monopoly” (16).

25 Organized competition is common in nonprofessionalized practice, particularly when segments of the practice are seeking to professionalize. This is particularly evident with the drama competitions in early- and mid-twentieth century Canada (see Mann and Southgate and Lee). Taylor discusses competitions in the history of English theatre. And Leadbeater and Miller discuss competition in the wider sphere of pro-am practice.
cultural regimes of production, reception and criticism. But in other cases, the vocabulary synchronizes with professional practices to the extent that one might wonder, as I encourage one to do, how oppositional these practices, beyond unionized regulations, may in fact be.

Inherited negative views of amateur practice are endemic in and constitutive of the discourse. Thus, they are rarely interrogated. It is to the question of vocabulary that I now wish to turn. How can we, indeed how should we, define the terms “amateur”—“that most dangerous of descriptions” (Read 50)—and “professional” within the richly historicized context of Western theatre practice? At what moments are inscribed denotations at odds with popular connotative usages? At what points do their rolling definitions take on and shed pejorative connotations? And when do these connotations influence social taste, reception practices and, consequently, cultural production and consumption practices?

That which I locate as the place of nonprofessionalized theatre practice is subject to what Keir Elam, following Umberto Eco, terms “undercoding.” Undercoding is the “formation of rough and approximate norms in order to characterize a phenomenon which is not fully understood or which is only vaguely differentiated for us” (Elam 55). As a “common experience,” we undercode unfamiliar amateur practices in terms such as “inferior,” unfocused,” “imitative” and “dilettantish.” These pejorative connotations of the term “amateur” are imprecise, and therefore generalizing and unproductive. They haunt the discourses of Western culture even as they seek to aggrandize counterpart professional practices.

Some have sought to separate these connotations from “amateur” by calling for a distinction between “amateur” and “amateurish” (see Melvill 1 and Perry 31), where the former takes on the spirit of the practice while the latter bears the pejorative meanings. The OED makes a distinction between the two: The “amateur” is “One who loves or is fond of; one who has a
taste for anything” or “One who cultivates anything as a pastime” (the opposite of a “professional”); it is also used “disparagingly” as an adjective in apposition to a discipline. Conversely, “amateurish” is used only in relation to the latter case of “having the faults or deficiencies of amateur work.” “Professional,” in its contemporary sense, refers to “one’s profession or calling.” The English language has no “amateur” equivalent to the “profession.”

In other words, while there is a “profession” to which one may declare her work, there is no equivalent “amateurum.” The professional bears a set of standards to which she asserts her allegiance, as it were.

Historically, when applied to the practice of theatre the terms “amateur” and “professional” have had an antonymous relationship wherein the former fills the gaps in the practice that are unoccupied by the latter. But this relationship is variable. When the accepted cultural space of one changes, that of the other changes accordingly, and eventually the usage modifies. Theatre practices within a culture tend to move from amateur to professional and recorded theatre histories tend to corroborate this move by viewing the progress of theatre practice as a desire or struggle to create a sustainable profession. Individuals within the field often view themselves as moving from amateur to professional status by joining professional associations. Thus, the profession occupies teleological space within a field of practice. The remaining spaces, those parts of the field unoccupied by professional practice, is termed amateur.

The consequences of subjecting “amateur” to the position of a descriptor defined always in antonymic stress and perpetually without precise location in the discourse include the inference that it is necessarily the “dependent, weaker practice.”

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26 Twelve words are derivative of “profession,” including “professional,” while five words are derivative of “amateur,” plus the two derivative multiword lexemes “amateur dramatic” and “amateur dramatics.”
Amateur theatre practice is frequently represented in plays as farcical, mock-heroic and pathetic. Embedded in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is the mechanicals’ clumsy amateur theatrical activity. In Alan Ayckbourn’s *A Chorus of Disapproval*, the Pendon Amateur Light Operatic Society cobbles together *The Beggars Opera* as their lives begin to mirror the opera’s action. In Michel Marc Bouchard’s *Lilies (The Revival of a Romantic Drama)*, ex-prisoners play out events in the life of a bishop whom they have trapped as their audience. In Sally Clark’s *Jehanne of the Witches*, Gilles de Rais repeatedly stages his mystery play about Joan of Arc with the townsfolk in order to come to terms with his past. Other representations of amateur theatre are found in Douglas Bowie’s *!SGODSDOGS!* , Kristen Thomson’s *I Claudia*, Sharon Pollock’s *And Out Goes You*, Tom Wood’s *Claptrap* and a number of James Reaney’s plays. Feature films have also represented amateur theatre practice, including *Waiting for Guffman* and, with conspicuously high production values, *Rushmore*.²⁷

Nonprofessionalized practices in many disciplines are seen as irrelevant, or even as existing outside of the discipline itself. Scholars and practitioners alike tend to view contemporary amateur theatre as either an insignificant phenomenon or a threat to the development of the profession. Historian George Taylor has described the relationship between professional and amateur as one of mutual “fear and envy” that is not equaled in other disciplines (Taylor 10). He suggests that the division between the two is never so clearly perpetuated as it is in theatre.²⁸ Elsewhere, amateur theatre practice has been variously described as “an emotional oasis” (Cohen-Cruz 7), “awkward” and self-serving (Burton and Lane 21) where one is found

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²⁷ I am indebted to members of the Canadian Drama Listserv for directing me toward a few of these titles.

²⁸ Taylor remarks that theatre’s amateur and professional practices “are not yet equal partners in the development of the theatre for the common good” (11). Nevertheless, his forward-looking tone bears remarkable similarities to that of other, more recent, commentators speaking of a variety of amateur practices, including Anderson and Leadbeater and Miller.
“conjuring scenes of Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland rummaging through Granny’s trunk in the barn, puttin’ on a show” (Kuftinec 23). At best it is viewed as a primitive precursor to professional theatre; at worst it is seen as “inhibiting the spread of professional theatre” (Hendry 258). In Canada it is not normally eligible for federal funding and only occasionally gains corporate notice. In print there exist fond reminiscences of amateur theatre (L. Cohen, Winston), but they tend to lack critical perspective and thus either evade critical attention or, worse, stand in place of it. The rhetoric tends toward pathos, not logos. These romanticized renderings, while they serve to mollify hard-working amateur practitioners, cloud the discussion of their practices, aesthetics, social significances and cultural positionings. Somewhat more productive, if only fleeting, is Alan Read’s comment in Theatre and Everyday Life that

Admittance of the “amateur” is the acceptance of a segregated culture where play and work have been finally divorced, where what is “left over” for those outside the specialized and professional is so trivial as to have become the site for distracting alienations—jealousy, gossip and power. (50)

But then the apologia: “This is not to deny that some of the best theatre occurs under this inauspicious sign.” His dismissal of nonprofessionalized work lacks corroborative study. However, the scholarship that does exist is scarce and primarily situates local nonprofessionalized theatre as antecedent to national professional theatre (see important works by Chansky in the US, Taylor in the UK and Mann and Southgate in Ontario). Beyond these,

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29 As co-founder of Manitoba Theatre Centre, Hendry pointed out the increasing deficits incurred by MTC during its first eight years (1958-65) to make the point that state funding (in the form of subsequent Canada Council grants) will not only be welcome, but will keep Canadian theatre talent in Canada. Presumably he saw amateur theatres in cities with professional “regionals,” like MTC, as competition that diverted audiences (and therefore income) and possibly talent. He did, however, downplay the amateur theatre factor in comparison to a lack of potential future leadership for theatres like MTC (artistic directors and business administrators), which he considered to be “a far more serious reason for the present pause in expansion” (258). Historian Maria Tippett notes that encouraging amateur practices has been viewed as a threat to professionalizing factions in Canada as early as the 1930s. Reacting to it “ultimately furthered the cause of professionally minded cultural producers” (Tippett 16-17).
however, there are no studies that provide extended attention to nonprofessionalized theatre practice. But the field is wider than the extant discourse reveals. Nonprofessionalized theatre has been practiced with significant social impact for three millennia.

The perception exists that sustained attention to nonprofessionalized theatre in scholarly, government and corporate discussion itself risks the label “amateur” and is therefore to be avoided on principle. In two articles, Cochrane has addressed the “virtual exclusion of amateur theatre as a substantive narrative of twentieth-century British theatre” (Cochrane “Pervasiveness” 233) in part because it “does not fulfill the traditionally accepted criteria of artistic excellence or innovation” (Cochrane “Contaminated” 169). The professional historian shuns amateur theatre as an “ersatz” theatre excluded from “real” theatre practice while “sitting as audience in her own favoured performance environment” (Cochrane “Contaminated” 170). She may approach the performance event from a very different perspective and with “entirely different relations with the performers” (Cochrane “Contaminated” 170). This phenomenon, Cochrane continues, is an aesthetic phenomenon by which, following Pierre Bourdieu and Tony Bennett, the historian/critic subject becomes the site of culturally produced aesthetic taste (Cochrane “Pervasiveness” 234-35). Today’s theatre criticism, Cochrane says, is concerned with intellectual edification while it denies the participatory aspects of theatre, which amateur theatre practice foregrounds. She sees amateur theatre as thriving in locations where professional theatre has found “unfavourable” conditions (Cochrane “Pervasiveness” 236). Moreover, she points out that “participation in amateur theatre […] has come to be seen as an affront to professional standards,” a view that is espoused by professional artists and professional historians, primarily because public subsidy creates funding competition, which in turn leads to a competition for “human capital in the shape of specialized skills” (Cochrane “Pervasiveness” 237). By claiming
a monopoly over theatrical cultural production in a region, “expensive, essentially élite prestige
institutions [she cites the UK’s National Theatre] actually prove obstacles to nationwide access
to theatre” (Cochrane “Pervasiveness” 238). One might benefit from privileging the artistic
autonomy of the amateur aesthetic over professional theatre’s regulatory ethos.

From an historiographic perspective, then, Cochrane follows Edward Said by stressing a
rereading of the cultural archive with an awareness of “multiple histories,” some of which may
not oppose the dominant discourse but in fact “cooperate with it,” while “accept[ing] the
contamination of context” (Cochrane “Contaminated” 169). Cochrane rereads the theatre climate
in Wales in the early-1930s by citing the frustration of at least one member of the Welsh
National Theatre Players, a professional touring company, in drawing meager audiences while
local nonprofessionalized groups played to full houses. She suggests that because “economic and
demographic turbulence shaped and reshaped life in Welsh communities […], the ‘play’ of
theatre fulfilled different kinds of cultural need” (Cochrane “Contaminated” 170):

The assumption that this commonplace phenomenon is “not-theatre” has, I have
suggested, led to the virtual silencing of half a century of extensive theatrical activity. “Real” theatre in Wales only begins to emerge in the 1960s with more
sustained and state-funded attempts to stabilize professional initiatives. (Cochrane
“Contaminated” 170)

By ignoring nonprofessionalized theatre practice, historians ignore a set of cultural practices
focused on engaging with local populations in both the production and spectatorship of theatre,
preserving the local language and idioms attempting to create a national drama, all in aversion to
imperial monolingualism (Cochrane “Contaminated” 171-72). In particular, during the
Depression Welsh amateur theatre groups selected non-local playscripts to produce; however,
these allowed local populations to “present themselves to themselves through the medium of
dramatic genres, ‘playing’ in separate time and place away from everyday social concerns, work,
or the agony of not having work” (Cochrane “Contaminated” 174). More than escapism, such performances, characterized by what Victor Turner calls “the subjunctive mood,” strengthen local bonds and lead to communitas. These “highly organized,” “therapeutic” and ultimately “anti-structural” activities replace the void left by the disappearance of work activities grounded in “class, economic or professional power, and distance” (Cochrane “Contaminated” 174).30 Thus, drawing their strength as forms of community ritual, nonprofessionalized theatre practices, such as those found in early twentieth-century Wales, are particularly suited to the purpose of “attempt[ing] to construct a representative theatre tradition” (Cochrane “Contaminated” 176) at the national level, where aping foreign practices fails. Thus, there is competition between professional and nonprofessionalized practices within the field of theatre, but it is not solely predicated on artists’ access to training and audiences’ access to theatre productions through publicity campaigns and outreach programs. Social competition between professional and nonprofessionalized practices, as will be discussed later on, is heavily predicated on “taste.”

30 The subjunctive mood was certainly what many Canadians during the Depression sought when practicing theatre: “Think what it means to the tired wife of an unsuccessful farmer […] if she can be Queen Elizabeth for a little while,” said British Columbia playwright and B.C. Department of Education school and community drama director Major L. Bullock-Webster to a group of educators in 1938 (qtd in Tippett 54).
Chapter 3

Discipline Issues:

Three Familiar, Contested Terrains

By “professional,” I mean the application of discipline, focus, energy and commitment.

Institutions: Borderlands of the “Pure” Theatre Professional

Constitutive of the discourse of contemporary theatre practice is the struggle, carried out by practitioners and policymakers in the field of cultural production, to construct a profession, define it, dominate it and thus dominate the discourse. That which is left for chaff is amateur. The struggle to control the meaning of the designation “professional artist” is the struggle to control the field of artistic production and its constitutive discursive relations. This is the struggle to control taste and the hierarchies of value that “professional” implies. It has very real consequences for every agent working in the field because its parameters determine [h]ow cultural distinctions are invoked by dominant groups to legitimate some cultural practices and not others; to credit some cultural forms with the status of taste, quality, aesthetics and Art; to win government subsidy for some cultures and not others. (Hawkins 6)

Capital ‘A’ “Art” refers to those forms of art that are state-funded and are consequently legitimated as “superior, high or fine cultural activities” (Hawkins 6). Cochrane’s formation is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s afore-cited dictum, “Theatre divides its public and divides itself,” and reminds us that other art segments may do the same. However, her phrasing implies that art, or Art, is not so much self-dividing as it is susceptible to top-down state division.
Arguably the most influential constitutive definitions in cultural fields are those set out by the state. As active statements within a discourse, arts definitions enable selected artists, companies and organizations to be eligible for recognition and support—including grants, services and awards—while they exclude those that fall outside established criteria. Definitions allow states to order participants within a field of cultural production and regulate the discursive relations between them. They frequently include a defining statement on what constitutes professional practice within the field. As theatre practitioner and activist Jean Yoon has noted, in Canada during the mid-1980s and early-1990s, “Arts councils began initiating policy changes regarding jury compositions, and clarifying definitions of ‘professionalism’” (Yoon 7).

The Government of Canada’s “Status of the Artist Act,” which sets out guidelines for the “professional relations between artists and producers in Canada” (Canada “Status” 6), views artists as “independent contractors” in order to bring its discourse in line with those of non-culture-specific labour discourses. Among its effects, the Act assigns a Tribunal which, in turn, accepts applications by groups wishing to be designated “artist associations.” To do this, the Tribunal recognizes three criteria as definitive of “professional” independent contractors. The professional

(i) is paid for the display or presentation of that independent contractor’s work before an audience, and is recognized to be an artist by other artists,

(ii) is in the process of becoming an artist according to the practice of the artistic community, or

(iii) is a member of an artists’ association. (Canada “Status” 12)

Here, either income resulting from public display of one’s art and recognition as an artist by one’s peers, recognized apprenticeship or artist association membership designate an artist as
“professional” and, by exclusion, all other artists as nonprofessional. “Professional” is not a descriptor for an artist’s standards, attitude or temperament here but a designation which follows particular, quantifiable criteria already established by one’s fellow participants in the field.

Other state definitions are set forth in order to disburse subsidies. These define a “field of patronage” (Hawkins xix) that guides the state and its arm’s-length agencies in identifying where subsidies are to be allocated and in what proportion. In Canada, the most influential federal funding body for the arts is the Canada Council for the Arts, an arm’s-length agency reporting to the federal Minister of Canadian Heritage. Its central point of definition for dispersal of arts funding is the term “professional,” after which subsequent points of definition are aligned, and from which “the development of the arts” is “fostered” (Canada, “About Us”). The Canada Council defines a “professional artist” as one who:

- has specialized training in his or her artistic field (not necessarily obtained in an academic institution);
- is recognized as such by his or her peers (artists working in the same artistic tradition);
- is committed to devoting more time to the artistic activity if this becomes financially feasible;
- has a history of public presentation (Canada, search: “glossary”)

It defines a “professional company or organization” as one that “supports, presents or produces the work of professional artists.” Thus, according to the government, training, peer acknowledgement and time spent doing the art (past and future) define the artistic practice of professional agents and thus define those segments of artistic practice that constitute professional practice. Those segments that fall outside of these criteria are by definition not professional and
are therefore not eligible for state patronage. The Council’s definitions attempt to reduce impressionistic connotations of the term “professional” in order to clarify targeted subsidy recipients. Criteria notably excluded from the Council’s definition of a professional artist are income, genre or style of the artist’s work and, significantly, any mention of an external view of what may constitute a professional artist by those outside of the field of artistic production (though there are many to be found). But as Hawkins notes, with any state definitions the “process of definition is never fixed; the practice of patronage continually produces meanings for ‘art’” even when, as sometimes is the case, definitions do not reflect the “shifting terrain” beneath them (Hawkins 4).

Whereas the Canada Council is careful to define what is meant by “professional artist” in order to clarify and limit prospective funding applicants, the Canadian Actors’ Equity Association equates the term with its members by avoiding formal definition. Equity carves room for its members to constitute the field by allowing them to individually define their use of the term “professional” in order to own their stake in the Association. By avoiding specific definitions of what constitutes a professional artist, Equity allows itself to easily adapt its blanket supremacy over Anglo-Canadian theatre, opera and dance. Operating as a union with a mandate to “support the creative efforts of its members by seeking to improve their working conditions and opportunities” (Canadian), Equity asserts that

If you are a member of another performing arts union or association […] you must become a member of Equity to work in a theatre which operates under Equity’s jurisdiction. The principle is that you can’t be a professional in one part of the business and a non-professional in another. (Canadian “Member Services”)

31 The CAEA’s counterpart in the US, Actors Equity, opens their information booklet by referring to its purview as “the art of professional theatre,” as if to define “professional theatre” as an entire art form separate from other theatre practices (“About Equity”).
Somewhat paradoxically, the statement begins in a spirit of cross-jurisdictional camaraderie, but ends by implying that you may be a member of one professional association but if you are not a Canadian Equity member working in Canadian Equity’s jurisdiction you cannot in fact be professional at all. Membership in Equity is achieved as the result of a process by which the individual is either offered an Equity contract by the management of an Equity company, or the individual works a specified number of shows for a specified number of Equity companies within a specified number of years. Under this second process, the Equity guidelines state that the individual, designated as an “apprentice,” is given “the opportunity to keep a foot in both the professional and in the non-professional camp” at the outset of his or her career. Moreover, “This opportunity is not open to an artist who has become a fully paid-up member.” The individual then pays an “initiation fee”—“the cost of being able to take advantage of the gains made by those who have fought before you”—and membership in Equity is achieved. The individual pays twice-yearly dues in order to maintain membership. Within the terms set out by Equity, the individual is now a professional artist by virtue of his or her membership in the Association. To put it another way, as far as Equity is concerned there is no professional status for theatre, opera and dance artists outside of Equity’s designation. Those artists who are not Equity members are “non-professionals.”

Equity’s influence across the field is pervasive. The Association exerts influence over individual artists by expropriating the designation “professional.” Legitimate companies are those that agree to cast or hire only (or mostly) Equity members as determined by specified contracts, including the Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) for members of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT), or the Independent Theatre Agreement (ITA) for non-PACT members. Other documents determine Equity members’ relations with non-Equity
groups in the field, including “The Small Scale Theatre Addendum (SSTA), “The Co-op Guidelines,” “The Fringe Waiver” and “The Amateur Contract.” Its purview is wide: “As an association, several thousand strong, there is much we can do to secure the future of the arts in Canada” (“Road” 2).

However, among Equity members, ownership of the term “professional” is a matter of current debate—a debate that holds significance for the field of theatre practice. In a heated exchange of letters in the Association’s newsletter, two members weighed in on the terms “professional” and “professionalism” in the context of Canadian theatre practice. Writes Scotty Watson,

The very idea of labeling oneself a “professional actor,” without membership in Canadian Actors’ Equity is ridiculous. Worst yet, unscrupulous producers who advertise non-equity shows as “professional productions” are both ludicrous and offensive to the real professionals within Equity.

The ONLY mark of professionalism within the theatrical community is voluntary and accepted membership in Canadian Actors’ Equity Association.[…]

How many times have we heard the lament “I’ve been working as an actor for 20 years. Just because I don’t have my Equity card, doesn’t mean I’m not professional”?

Yes. Yes it does.[…]

If an actor is a member of Equity, (or is in the process of becoming a member), they are a professional actor. All others, by definition are amateurs. (Watson 6)

Watson’s exclusivist interpretation equates Equity membership in a one-to-one ratio with the designation “professional”; “amateurs” necessarily populate the rest of the field. Elsewhere he cites the section of the “Status of the Artist Act” noted above in order to support his argument (though he apparently ignores the “or” relationship between the three points). He colludes the denotation of the term “professional,” as a sign of association membership, with the connotation of the term, as an attitude, in order to argue that membership in Equity is analogous to an attitude
that cannot be shared by non-member theatre artists. For Watson, the domains of two practices are mutually exclusive.

In response to Watson’s letter, fellow Equity member Jameson Kraemer states a more inclusivist interpretation of the terms, having been “put off by the tone of” Watson’s piece:

The terms “amateur” and “professional” have become far too abused in our business, and it’s time that it came to a stop. There is nothing wrong with being an “amateur” (we all were at one point in time), and being a “professional” does not mean you have now reached the pinnacle of greatness.

Yes, our business is in a crisis; believe me I know. My fellow actors and I have been fighting like mad to get legitimate, Equity-approved work for about 10 years now and, unfortunately, we’ve never known it to be otherwise. Perhaps it’s this kind of exclusive, holier-than-thou attitude that makes other “amateur” actors think twice about wanting to join or associate with our organization.[…]

I’d like to think I’m not alone in believing that being a “professional” has more to do with an individual’s demeanor and work ethic, than it does with one’s membership to an organization. We need to encourage non-union actors and artists alike who are struggling to get by like the rest of us, and show them that equity is an organization that cares deeply and is willing to fight for their rights.

If we are going to call ourselves “professional” then we need to conduct ourselves in a more understanding, inclusive, and professional manner, not as though we are part of some popular high school clique. (Kraemer 9)

By emphasizing the connotation of the term “professional” as an attitude that can be held by all artists working in the field, regardless of affiliation, and by describing the field as one in which Equity members work with, instead of against, other artists, Kraemer seeks to strengthen the field, and thus the association. Kraemer’s statement suggests acknowledges that as an artistic field, theatre is organized as a participatory, not an exclusive, practice.

Though Equity operates as a disciplinary regime, ordering and policing itself and the discursive field in which it operates, the extent to which it is able to do this remains in debate within its ranks. Equity, an association that sees itself as continually struggling to define its value and scope within its field and within the wider economy, includes members who seek to delegitimize the rest of the field, as well as those who believe that they (must) work alongside
the rest of the field. At the same time that the debate holds significance for the positioning of artists operating outside of Equity, it also holds significance in terms of the degree to which Equity members and their Association can remain relevant in the eyes of the rest of the field, its non-Equity practitioners and the audiences who support them.

**Practices: Community Theatre / Community-Based Performance**

Though a theatre community constitutes a restricted field, by no means does it constitute a unified one. In ways different from Bourdieu’s divided Parisian theatre of the mid-twentieth century, the disparate elements of Canadian theatre practice (professional, nonprofessionalized, hybrid paraprofessional) and the changing discourses within which they operate, perpetuate the division of their production-consumption in large part because of the diverse ways in which they define, engage and impact—that is, re/present—their wider communities. But the ways in and degrees to which theatre companies do and do not re/present their communities have become fundamental matters of debate within theatre discourse in recent years. As a result, in theatre studies the applied usage of the term “community” has been taken up in a taxonomical “tug-of-war” among defined and defining factions who seek to appropriate the term to endear their type of practice to others.

Theatre’s restricted field of production is commonly known as the “theatre community.”32 Theatre practices relate to their communities in a variety of ways. Variously, they

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32 In his MA thesis “Forging a Professional Community: The Evolution of the Institution of English Canadian Theatre—1955 to 1979,” professional production manager and educator Sholem Dolgoy takes for granted the idea of a unified “Canadian Theatre Community,” referred to therein as “The Community” or “the CTC,” in order to discuss “the economics of Canadian theatre” (Dolgoy 9) to produced what he calls “the first extensive examination of the
seek to build, define, reflect, subvert or enable those who live nearby or those who share similar impulses near and/or far. This is true regardless of the professional identity of constitutive artists who may self-define as professional, amateur or hybrid paraprofessional. However, these practices are normally set apart from one another in the discourse by those who engage in them.

One strategy that is frequently employed to segregate theatre practices is the appropriation of the slippery term “community.” Scholars define two broad uses of “community.” One use refers to territorial boundaries, such as neighbourhoods or nations; the other refers to relational categories in which similar peoples are grouped together (literally or figuratively), such as hobbyists or ethnic groups (McMillan and Chavis 8; Bell and Newby 32; Goode 153). But in theatre studies, “community” is a highly contested term that practitioners and scholars have competed to own when articulating seemingly disparate practices.

In their extensive 1973 study on the subject, Bell and Newby (following Butterworth and Weir) observe that “community” is frequently treated as a “God word” in front of which we abase ourselves (Bell and Newby 15). For people in industrialized nations, they note that the term frequently conjures nostalgic feelings for a past, utopian “organic solidarity” and a “good life” that may in fact never have existed (Bell and Newby 22, 23). In order to emphasize the widespread disagreements over the use of the term “community,” after tracking a litany of definitions they conclude with emphasis: “the one common element in all of them was man [sic]!” (Bell and Newby 15). They track an historical shift away from community toward industrialized culture where people’s interrelations grew less dependent on their status and more dependent on legal contracts (Bell and Newby 22). This shift is analogous to Durkheim’s development of the institutions that today support The Community” (Dolgoy 12). Says Dolgoy, “As I had been a member of The Community starting in the second half of the study’s period, I was quickly able to develop a rapport with those who were willing to be generous with their time” (Dolgoy 12).
observation of the overall move from Gemeinschaft (community) to Gesellschaft (society or association). With this nostalgia and frequency of use in mind, we can conclude that “community” tends to be appropriated for one’s own use, frequently in order to endear one’s cause to others. This is particularly true for theatre studies, where “community” refers to either the geographical area in which, or for which, a theatre company or a group of artists practice; a group of artists and companies, in terms of “theatre community;” or to one of many forms of theatre practice, as discussed below. The interaction of the three uses constitutes the dynamic operations of theatre practice as a field of cultural production.

The “theatre community,” a relational as well as a territorial type of community, is variously understood to include a global purview of anyone regularly involved in theatre production or consumption or, more specifically, anyone within municipal (or less frequently, national) boundaries who practices theatre, ostensibly from within the profession. Its referents are dependent on the context. It includes producers, artists, creative teams, technicians, administrators, journalists, theatre scholars and frequent theatre patrons. These are Bourdieu’s “agents” and their various operations constitute a field of restricted production that produces goods intended for self-consumption in workshop settings, rehearsal halls, previews and, arguably, avant-garde or experimental performances (each acknowledged as having limited public attendance). Its members are necessarily linked, directly and indirectly, via public funding and grant competitions, project submissions, open or invited audition practices and joint audience attraction practices.

The theatre community, as a field of restricted production, is thus set apart from the wider field of large-scale production in which products are produced for mass consumption by the public-at-large. For example, a theatre company may choose a script, audition and acquire
personnel to produce the show, rehearse and preview the show for a select audience within its field of restricted production. Whether or not the public run of the show breaks into the field of large-scale production (as large commercial theatre productions tend to do) first depends on the extent to which the audience members constitute “the public at large,” as opposed to family members and close friends or members of the “theatre community,” including frequent theatre patrons. In general, the “dream” of moving one’s work from the restricted field of production to the large-scale field of production defines the parameters of any agent’s function within the field. The location of nonprofessionalized practice is in direct and complex relation to professional practice. It frequently straddles the fields of restricted and large-scale production with the benefit of accumulating symbolic capital for itself and for other cultural practices located in each.

Sociologist William J. Goode notes that as an occupation “approaches the pole of professionalization, it begins to take on the traits of a community” (Goode 154). The theatre profession is well within theatre’s restricted field of production, guarded and disciplined fiercely by its membership as a community in itself. A profession functions as a “contained community” that is both a part of and dependent on “the larger society” (Goode 152). When viewed through the cultural production model, “larger society” is analogous to the field of cultural production when analyzing artistic fields such as theatre. Thus, as a contained relational community, a profession is constituted by members who share an identity, values and a common language, maintain a continuing status (they rarely leave) and agree on “role definitions”; the professional community as a whole disciplines its individual members, clarifies its social limits and reproduces itself by selecting, training and socializing its members (Goode 153). Constitutive ideals justify the profession’s policies and goals and, when accepted by the members, they “become an index of power of the community” (Goode 154). An individual’s initiation into a
professional community requires an isolated period of socialization during which she learns to associate with new “reference groups,” grows dependent on The Profession, and is punished for “inappropriate attitudes and behaviours” (Goode 156). In theatre practice this period, and its constitutive disciplinary codes, is analogous to the time a practitioner spends in accredited training schools and apprenticeships. But significantly, control is also enforced from without, as “clients”—analogous to audience-consumers in the cultural production model—exert economic controls on practicing professionals (Goode 157). In the case of theatre, the box office requires the generation and regeneration of audiences to sustain the profession within the restricted field of production. Thus, as much as members of a theatre profession discipline themselves, their patrons (the word holds particular historical relevance in this context) discipline them. And reciprocally, art-based professional communities lobby for protections, such as government funding, against the unfavourable economic climates produced when box office income cannot fund all operations.

Whereas a professional theatre community is definable because its agents and elements are linked by, and traceable through, the mechanisms of its professional associations, the relationships of nonprofessionalized theatres to the concept of community are more complex. A nonprofessionalized theatre interacts with its community not through professional association-defined strictures but through individual social bonds. Personal professional aspirations may or may not be a factor. Though every nonprofessionalized theatre company belongs to the theatre community in terms of its production practices within the field of theatre, each one is, primarily, a territorial community unto itself, a locus toward which members of the wider local community gravitate in order to take part in the production and reception of theatre. And because, as we shall see later on, nonprofessionalized companies frequently experience high turnover among
members, their “core administrators” negotiate complex, passive control mechanisms over their membership in order to maintain production. Administrators must be cognizant of the history of the company in order to understand its niche and thus to fill the needs of the wider community. In this way, each nonprofessionalized theatre functions as what social ecologists term a “biotic community” (Bell and Newby 33) wherein it takes on a history and life of its own, separate (yet constitutive) of individual members but reliant on its core administrators for continuance.

While professional theatre practice is frequently discussed in terms of its national and international import, nonprofessionalized theatre practice, at least in North America, is rarely contextualized beyond the local community once professionalization of the field has gained momentum. Nonprofessionalized theatres today are normally viewed without geographically ranging significance. Nonprofessionalized productions rarely tour and even new plays rarely receive a second production elsewhere, primarily due to the stigma attached to nonprofessionalized work.

Nor does the political commitment of nonprofessionalized practice normally extend far within its community. This is due to its participatory focus as substantively open to everyone. Thus, whereas Baz Kershaw has discussed professional and hybrid companies engaged in politically active performance within a counter-culture of resistance (Kershaw Politics 38), nonprofessionalized companies are driven by their open participatory needs. These participatory needs derive from a variety of needs for members of local populations to engage in theatre practice as creative citizens. However, Susan Bennett notes that the reception of amateur theatre practice is far from apolitical, particularly in rural areas that do not have professionalizing practices. Because “the event of community theatre is able to act as social affirmation of a particular group of people” (Bennett 102), it can offer for discussion issues that may have
pertinence to local populations while gauging these populations’ potential interest in theatre practice generally.

Nonprofessionalized companies, including the two in this study, frequently appropriate “community” to describe the companies at which they work by referring to themselves as “community theatres.” “Walterdale is composed of professionals & non-professionals,” argued president John Rivet, around the time he attended the 1975 national conference in Ottawa on the funding of community theatre. “Therefore, let’s drop the use of amateur in respect to Walterdale, & let’s refer to it as a community theatre, as a company of volunteers” (Rivet, Untitled). This was likely Rivet’s strategy of conceptually separating Walterdale from other nonprofessionalized companies that he deemed less serious, or even less skilled, in their work.

In critical discourse, however, the term “community theatre” is highly contested insomuch as it is appropriated, celebrated or abused for the purpose of describing sundry forms either favoured or disfavoured. For example, scholar Dorothy Chansky, in her analysis of the American Little Theatre Movement of the 1910s and 1920s, separates “Little Theatre” from (post-1920s) “community theatre.” The latter, exemplified in the film Waiting for Guffman, she says, is valuable only insomuch as it encourages us to “laugh at their delusions,” though she adds the critic’s apology: “but not to discredit their locating worthiness in the creation of a piece of amateur theatre” (Chansky 32). Uncritical sidebars like this are unhelpful in understanding the value of many nonprofessionalized theatres. Here, the term “community theatre” is vilified in order to boost her argument for the value of its pre-professional predecessors, the Little Theatres.

Elsewhere, critics elide “community theatre” with, or distinguish it from, “community-based theatre” or “community-based performance” (see Cohen-Cruz, Kuftinec, Kershaw, van Erven, Knowles and Little). Thus, Kershaw refers to community-based performance as
community theatre. And Eugene van Erven titles his study *Community Theatre*, though inside the covers he refers to the practice interchangeably with the term “community-based theatre.” He even goes so far as to omit amateur practice from either of these designations by offhandedly commenting on its “umpteenth amateur production of, say, *Death of a Salesman*” (van Erven 2). They also mention other synonyms of the professionally facilitated form, including the common “grassroots theatre.” The elision of “community theatre” with the professionally facilitated form amounts to an erasure of nonprofessionalized theatre for the sake of promoting that which is touched by the profession. With no sustained scholarship on nonprofessionalized practice in the discourse to counteract these rampant erasures, they go unchecked.

Jan Cohen-Cruz, in her important study of one form of professional-amateur hybrid practice that she terms “community-based performance,” takes pains to distinguish between community-based performance and amateur community theatre. The former she describes as a field of collaboration between artists and “people whose lives directly inform the subject matter, express collective meaning” (Cohen-Cruz 1); the latter she describes in less-erudite terms by shifting from a critical mode to a markedly impressionistic one. The way in which she describes amateur practice—her enunciative modality within the discourse—will be familiar:

Growing up in the small town of Reading, Pennsylvania, I performed in community theatre—amateur productions, typically of plays that had thrived on Broadway at least a decade earlier. This is not to denigrate community theatre, which is often amateur in the best sense, the love of doing it. In my own experience, community theatre was an emotional oasis, a place to express feelings in a small, somewhat repressed town. But in contrast to community-based performance, community theatre is enacted by people who neither generate the material, shape it, work with professional guidance, nor apply it beyond an entertainment frame. There need not be any particular resonance between the play and that place and those people, and there is rarely a goal beyond the simple pleasure of “Let’s put on a play.”

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33 Ric Knowles and Edward Little refer to an offshoot of the professionally facilitated form as “community plays” in relation to the Colway Theatre Trust process.
Here is the quintessence of my community theatre experience: playing the younger daughter, Millie, in William Inge’s *Picnic*, I would hear the sound cue, a train whistle, and I would say, “Some day I’m going to get on that train and go to New York.” It was about being special, different, not just Millie but me, the girl who would get away, to New York, where they do real theatre. Whereas community-based performance values what is right there. While people who shine gain special recognition in both, the light focused on actors in community-based performance spills onto the community as well. When, for example, local participant Wanda Daniels gave a beautiful performance in *Three Sisters from West Virginia* (Cornerstone Theatre’s adaptation of Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*), she also reflected a community that was not, contrary to popular opinion, composed of hillbillies. And although the pleasure of performing and familiarity between actors and spectators are shared by both community and community-based theatre, the latter could only be made by a particular group of performers for a particular community context. In contrast, our production of *Picnic* could have been exchanged with one in Any Town, USA, and, other than friends and family missing seeing their loved ones, would not have been that different. (Cohen-Cruz 7-8, emphasis in original)

The dismissive tone that Cohen-Cruz employs when describing the amateur theatre practice of her youth is primarily a rhetorical tactic used to counter any elision between her hybrid community-based performances and amateur theatre practices. In leaving the critical idiom behind in order to ridicule amateur theatre, she seeks to carve greater critical ground for praising community-based performances in which dedicated professionals import foreign artistic forms into a community to facilitate the telling of their otherwise unutterable stories. Thus, for Cohen-Cruz, community theatre “typically” stages post-Broadway shows in an “emotional oasis” defined by “feelings.” Even Reading—nothing but a “somewhat repressed town” in her estimation—falls in the poetic “quintessence” of her swathe. Reduced to expectant sound cues and dreams of stardom, community theatre is a site not of creative fission but of befuddled fusion between one’s life and one’s art. She denies amateur theatre practice its historic contexts and its social and aesthetic relevances. Her apologia, “this is not to denigrate community theatre,” rings hollow (particularly because it precedes the denigration). It is regrettable that her experience had
been so negative, but to implicate disparate practices and companies within her agenda over-
generalizes complex dynamics within the field of theatre practice.

Moreover her claim, though not an original one, that “community theatre is enacted by people who neither generate the material, shape it, work with professional guidance, nor apply it beyond an entertainment frame” is, in large part, inaccurate. Long-standing nonprofessionalized theatres such as Ottawa Little Theatre, Alumnae Theatre, Walterdale Playhouse, Regina Little Theatre and Langham Court Theatre (Victoria) include new play festivals, provide workshops (sometimes professionally led) and repeatedly acknowledge the importance of their productions and their practices within the community socially, aesthetically and historically.34 Ironically, Cohen-Cruz is one such person who has attempted to apply amateur community theatre “beyond an entertainment frame,” in this case by making it a strawman to her argument. Her claim that its practitioners desire to be elsewhere is solipsistic and her inverse claim that community-based theatre practitioners do not is a frail generalization. Indeed, though community-based theatre has been celebrated elsewhere as an “inclusive enterprise, and its scholarship no less so” (Kuftinec xvii), to its own detriment and that of other theatre practitioners there is ample record of its discursive boundaries being drawn by first appropriating the term “community” and then expelling amateur practice from its terrain and into critical oblivion.

Cohen-Cruz thus draws an analytic division between amateur community practice and community-based performance. The latter might be productively considered, particularly in

34 Chansky historicizes the beginning of this influence:
Little Theatre offered Americans the option of a revised contract between audiences and theatre endeavours. Producing, financing, distribution of productions and texts, dramaturgy, training, education, criticism, scenic and lighting design and advertising all acquired many of the features that are so entrenched in noncommercial theatre today that they seem natural to us. (Chansky 3)
Part II of this study picks up, in Toronto and Edmonton, where Chansky leaves off.
contrast to the former, as an example of what Johnnie Gratton and Michael Sheringham call “project work” (2). Gratton and Sheringham place emphasis on the “idea of the ‘project’” as a favoured mode of artistic and scholarly production in the postmodern era:

[T]he association of projects with the practice of adopting/adapting various professional roles and their attendant sets of working techniques (the artist as scientist, journalist, archivist, archaeologist, private detective, etc.) as well as with less formal but still coded—and therefore refashionable—roles (such as the traveler, the gleaner, or even the chess player. (Gratton and Sheringham 2)

Thus, Cohen-Cruz speaks of professionals leading projects with and for the unindoctrinated, undisciplined (in the Foucauldian sense) nonprofessionals. The form, though it requires adaptation to specific circumstance is, nevertheless a form, taught in undergraduate liberal arts courses and learned “on site” by budding professional apprentices. In lieu of shared professionalized codes, or codes particular to a company that were developed over decades, community-based theatre adapts/adopts the codes of a “project” to find efficient and effective common ground on which diverse agents can produce. Community-based theatre projects, then, “adopt/adapt” professional disciplinary codes of working that are carried out by one or more legitimized professionals among the yet-uninitiated local participants, though professional influence, at the time, may be mollified by hyperbolic vocabulary (“oh, the townsfolk are really doing it all themselves, I’m just here to facilitate,” and so on). They are the projects of professionals enabling/using nonprofessionalized participants.

**Imaginations: Robertson Davies and the Canadian Amateur, or Discourse-Tost**

As a final example of contested terrain, I turn to Canadian fiction for a glance at the place of amateur theatre in the Anglo-Canadian psyche. Robertson Davies’s first full-length novel,
Tempest-Tost (1951), appeared during Canada’s mid-century burst toward cultural professionalism. For anyone who has participated in an amateur theatre production, the novel’s narrative is bound to invoke a backstage-antics memory or two. Written and set at a time when Davies himself was embroiled in culture making and the professionalization of theatre, the novel illuminates a number of commonly held notions of professional and amateur practices. As is common when the work of an amateur theatre is the topic of discussion, the fabula draws into view the participants’ lives and romances more than the practice of theatre itself. Nevertheless, Davies’s characters usefully represent the debate at the time concerning the use of the terms “amateur” and “professional” as descriptors of both designation and attitude. They also bring to this debate a philosophical underpinning when they discuss “useful” and “ornamental” knowledge. As is clear from Richard Rose’s adaptation of the novel into a play at the Stratford Festival of Canada (now the Stratford Shakespeare Festival) in 2001, many of these notions remain unquestioned fifty years later. By considering Davies’s novel and Rose’s adaptation we can learn much about how theatre’s amateur and professional distinctions are reproduced over the second half of the twentieth century by practitioners working with and for major cultural institutions.

The novel Tempest-Tost, follows the members of a fictitious small-town Ontario amateur theatre company, the DDF award-winning Salterton Little Theatre (SLT), over the course of six weeks as they prepare for their open-air production of five showings of Shakespeare’s The Tempest. Skipping between the lives and backstories of more than two-dozen characters, the story is book-ended by fourteen-year-old Frededonde Webster’s pet project of making champagne cider in the shed on her father’s property, adjacent to his back lawn where the play will be staged. (Freddy, as she is known, plays Ceres in the production). Much of the story
concerns Freddy’s eighteen-year-old sister Griselda (plays Ariel) and her three admirers: Cambridge student Solly Bridgewater (assistant director), local military college student and professional engineer Roger Tasset (plays Ferdinand) and local forty-year-old high school math teacher Hector Mackilwraith (SLT Treasurer, plays Gonzalo). Freddy herself holds an interest in Solly. Reserved eighteen-year-old Pearl Vambrace (plays Miranda) receives less amorous attention from her fellow cast members, though she initially craves it from Roger. There is limited description of the play’s rehearsals but the characters’ extra-theatrical lives are followed in great detail. And because meanings and usages of crucial words such as “professional,” “amateur” and “Taste” (frequently written with the capital letter) are shared without question among Salterton’s population, their employment holds both narrative and aesthetic weight.

Throughout the novel, “professional” refers to either a specific position that one occupies at a day job, a state toward which one strives in extra-theatrical pursuits or a position one occupies in the field of theatre that is foreign to Canadian practice. Thus, Hector’s teaching career is a “difficult profession” (235) and a “professional life” filled with “professional ambition” (35) guided by “self-control” (158) and dialectical reason (36) formed from “planning and common sense” (80)—though he admits “a taste for amateur doctoring” when he reads Readers Digest (44). Smothered by his mother, Solly yearns for “a profession at which he could support himself” (110). Freddy sees her earnest attitude toward champagne cider-making as “very professional” (5, 6), Mr. Webster’s gardener, Tom, holds a “professional sense” toward his job (15) and Roger Tasset “approache[s] seduction professionally, or as a business” (83). But standing out among the “professionals” is Valentine Rich, a temporarily returned expatriate and much-heralded professional director and actor who grew up in Salterton but has since found acclaim in New York and London. The characters and the narrator find every reason to praise
Valentine as a “thorough professional” (238) in her approach to art and life. A model professional martyr from abroad, Valentine is cast as a sober head among a distracted menagerie of provincial townsfolk. She believes in being a professional and the others believe in her, as if religiously. Davies’s narrative implies that while professionals work a variety of jobs outside of Canadian theatre, their absence within Canadian theatre holds back the art and the culture.

Conversely, for a variety of practices, theatre chief among them, Davies treats the notion of being “amateur” with fancy and his familiar wit. The members of SLT are “enthusiasts” (22) engaged in “amusements” that Nellie prefers to call “activities” (23). In contrast to practice in professional theatre, says the narrator, “In the Little Theatre, she [Nellie] always said, you got a broader grounding; she had painted scenery, made costumes, acted, directed, dealt with matters of business, done everything, really, that could be done in a theatre” (115). For Hector, acting in the SLT production would be among “strange delights” (35), but for his teaching colleague Mr. Adams, the play and Hector’s appearance in it were “sure to yield a few good unintentional

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35 Nellie Forrester (SLT President) expects Valentine to give their production a “professional finish” (25) and she begins by “casting rapidly and without reference to Little Theatre politics” (94). Even Valentine’s pronunciation of Tom’s Welsh last name, “Gwalchmai,” is better than his own (114). And when, after the opening night’s intermission, she discovers Hector recovering after attempting to hang himself, her first thought is of the box office: “Do you realize that there are eight hundred and thirty-two people out there, of whom seven hundred and ninety have paid admission, whose pleasure you have imperiled?” (238). And just as professionally, she then proceeds to resolve Hector’s rehearsal-long obsession for Griselda by encouraging the latter to “talk to him for a little” (245). The narrator explains Valentine’s immediate rise to a high level of respect among the company:

The world is full of people who believe that they have never had their due, and they are the slaves of anyone who seems likely to make this deferred payment. Valentine, in a few days, had assumed this character among them, and they were all convinced that she was a woman of extraordinary penetration. She never sought or demanded anything for herself, she was ready to listen to everybody, within reason, she had no interest in humiliating or thwarting anybody, and in consequence all the keys of power in the Salterton Little Theatre had been gathered into her hands. (115)

Inverse to Anderson’s description of internet production, the professional finally had the “keys to the factory.”
laughs” (63). Indeed, by the end of the last dress rehearsal, the narrator informs us that Valentine thinks Hector is “a total loss; every amateur show has at least one” (229). Early on, we are told that Valentine resorts to casting “by search[ing] the room for people who might look well in costume” (91) and considers Roger “a godsend” as an attractive young male lead (138). Professor Vambrace (plays Prospero) has a “passionate egotism” for his acting that “by no means represented the temper of the club” (96). Following Nellie’s post-dress rehearsal speech to the actors, the narrator comments, “nothing appeals so strongly to the heart of the amateur actor as a thoroughly depressing estimate of his work, followed by a promise of food” (212). When asked by Solly to be the musical director for the production, without pay, Humphrey Cobbler muses, “Odd how so few really interesting jobs have any fee attached.[…] I shall get no money out of it, and my experience of theatre groups leads me to think that I shall get little thanks for it” (120). Scenes of amateurism speckle the story and it normally takes Valentine to quell them. Vambrace fears being upstaged by Solly’s intricately decorated dining table (125); several members of the cast insist on wearing swords not called for in the action and proceed to argue as to how to wield them (127); Roger gravitates toward assisting with the electrics, thus frequently missing his entrances during rehearsal (127); and Geordie Shortreed (plays Caliban) conjures up distracting practical jokes on his scene partners, leading eventually to the accidental electrocution of Mr. Webster’s ageing horse (131). In Davies’s telling, “amateur” is a spirited problem to be cured by professionals who are locally few and far between.36

The narrative’s focus on the personal and extra-theatrical lives of the amateur actors diminishes the significance of their practice to themselves and their community. Actual

36 Even in the eyes of Mr. Maybee, Salterton’s professional auctioneer, the townsfolk gathered at the bidding off of Valentine’s inherited estate are “the curiosity seekers, the amateurs at auctions” (178).
rehearsals are scarce in the plot, and when they appear they are chaotic. Arguments over which characters should have swords (and how they should wield them) and Shortreed’s practical jokes synecdochically stand in for six weeks of activity that somehow produce a staging of the play. In Davies’s telling, amateur theatre provides the situation not for the practice of theatre, but for the simulation of the practice of theatre, a passive object that is done (or done to) without the active practice of doing it. Davies’s chosen optic perpetuates the common belief that the show goes on *in spite of* its amateur participants.

Indeed, “professional” and “amateur” are frequently juxtaposed in Davies’s novel, their practices compared without question of their connotations and consequences. Thus, Solly’s mother says Stratford-upon-Avon “performed” *The Tempest* in 1934, but the Salterton Little Theatre will “concoct” “[w]hatever” in their turn (40). And according to the narrator, ironic in context, “Professional theatrical groups occasionally take a fling and perform some work, for sheer love, which they know will not make money; amateur groups never forget the insistency of the till” (50). SLT, reports the narrator, uses “lingo [that was] copied from the professional theatre, in which ‘dear’ and ‘darling’ were customary forms of address” (81). Roger takes exception to Valentine’s and the cast’s dismissal of modern sword handling as a “slight […] upon the profession of soldiering” (127). Says Humphrey to Valentine, “You and I are two of the three professionals involved with this show. We must stand together” (218); the third, he says is the gardener, Tom. In all, amateur theatre is an imposition to those earning wages in their professions (16): “sheer Hell,” predicts the narrator on behalf of Tom and the entrepreneurial Freddy (22). Talk of worldly professions circles the intrigue-fraught Little Theatre, but within the borders of SLT’s practice only Valentine and Humphrey may speak of professionalism with
legitimated authority, while the narrative swirls until it lights upon the main intrigue, Griselda, as the object of desire of her three admirers.

Subtle in Davies’s narrative is a humanist discussion about utilitarianism and the modern worlds of professionals and amateurs. A little past the midpoint of the novel, upstairs at Solly’s home, we are presented with the beginning of a philosophy that separates professional from amateur practice. During an argument about the present value of dated pronouncements on medicine, Humphrey accuses Hector of being “an advocate of Useful Knowledge,” to which Hector assuredly agrees. Humphrey continues:

“You say that a man’s first job is to earn a living, and that the first task of education is to equip him for that job?”

“Of course.”

“Well, allow me to introduce myself to you as an advocate of Ornamental Knowledge. You like the mind to be a neat machine, equipped to work efficiently, if narrowly, and with no extra bits or useless parts. I like the mind to be a dustbin of scraps of brilliant fabric, odd gems, worthless but fascinating curiosities, tinsel, quaint bits of carving, and a reasonable amount of healthy dirt. Shake the machine and it goes out of order; shake the dustbin and it adjusts itself beautifully to its new position.” [...]

“I know what I know,” said Hector, “and it is sufficient for my needs.”

“But you don’t begin to realize how much you don’t know,” said Humphrey, “and I strongly suspect that that is the source of your remarkable strength of character.” (159-60)

Hector, the model professional schoolteacher, focuses his acquisition of knowledge solely toward the betterment of his professional work; extraneous knowledge is a waste of his time. Self-control, planning and common sense complement his quest for Useful Knowledge. Conversely Humphrey, Salterton’s unorthodox musician, values knowledge but he values it diversely. Reminiscent of Nellie’s exaltation of the “broader grounding” provided by amateur practice, Humphrey’s speech presents the value of the unpolished and random in life, including artistic pursuits. It suggests that there is great, maybe even greater, creative potential in what Bliss Perry, as if in parallel, refers to as the “amateur spirit.” In what Patricia Morley has called a
comedy of “self-discovery” (Morley 96), Tempest-Tost treats the field of amateur practice as the ideal location for the acquisition of self-knowledge. This is precisely the pursuit in which, Humphrey argues, Hector—the “archetypal Canadian-without-Art” (Hoile n.pag)—must engage. But he must do so with the acquisition of not only Useful, but also Ornamental knowledge in mind.

Humphrey is the great philosopher for the rule breakers, one who colours outside the lines. His Ornamental Knowledge promises the New and the Unexpected, not only in content and form, but also in the organizational practices employed to articulate them. Ornamental Knowledge operates outside of pre-established, institutionalized ground rules for creation, sometimes leading to radical action, other times to a new way of developing an artistic project or even a field of practice. Humphrey’s self-identity as a professional who practises the amateur quality of breadth in knowledge problematizes the more commonly held view of the inutility of amateur practice, as presented in Davies’s complex narrative. In this way, Humphrey is the self-aware, postmodern, pro-am theatre practitioner (and professional musician) set apart from Cohen-Cruz’s (and SLT’s) purportedly interchangeable, indulgent community theatre practitioners.

Despite general agreement in the text regarding the usages of “professional and “amateur,” there are important slippages. Indeed, not everyone views SLT’s production as an entirely amateur endeavour. Nelly’s description of SLT’s “truly professional approach” (9) is not the only collusion of the labels. Solly’s contrarian mother says to him later,

“When I was a girl and we got up any private theatricals, we usually made rehearsals an excuse for very charming little teas, and sometimes eggnog parties.”

“I know Mother, but this is different. Much more professional in spirit.”

37 In Making Culture, Maria Tippett notes that “ornamental skills” was a pejorative term when applied to the fine arts (Tippett 38).
“Hmph, the world seems to be advancing in everything except amenity.”

(146)

Their exchange is revealing. On one level it signals an apparent reversal (or at least ironizing) of Solly’s earlier position on the designation of SLT’s practices indicated in the epigraph to Part I. On another level it alludes to a humanistic sociohistorical progression from private amateur theatricals to a public professional spirit. It suggests that the identity of a given production on these terms can be open to dispute, and on this point Solly’s mother entwines the “advancement” of the practice with her maturation from childhood to adulthood, thus drawing both into question as a loss of innocence. On a third level, her final observation suggests that as the practice of theatre draws closer toward a professional spirit, it becomes disassociated with extra-theatrical social gatherings that are, for her, essential. There was something lost when theatre practice gradually became saturated with professionalizing work.

Thus, with Valentine Rich as its stage director and Humphrey Cobbler as its musical director, SLT’s production of *The Tempest* is not strictly “amateur.” It is a hybrid paraprofessional theatre production, nonprofessionalized but not completely devoid of professionalized representation. It is presented to “realize a useful profit” (22) for the company and, in Nellie’s estimation at least, as the first “Pastoral” [*sic*] presented in Salterton, it is “an experiment, and we are breaking new ground” (211). The production shares the resources of those who identify as professional and amateur as a result of their past training and experience, pays no one but makes a profit for the company’s continuance, variously adopts and sheds professional and amateur attitudes toward the practice and presumably takes at least as much time as a professional show to prepare and stage (though again, rehearsals are underrepresented in Davies’s narrative). The production, in other words, is a professional-amateur hybrid set at a
time in Canada when the professional status of theatrical practice was gaining sociopolitical
attention in the nation’s policies and psyche.

Neither symbolism nor irony is absent when we consider that precisely fifty years after its
first printing, Davies’s novel found its way into a staged adaptation that premiered not at a
nonprofessionalized theatre, but at the flagship professional theatre of which Davies was a
founding board member: the Stratford Festival of Canada. Davies had initially conceived of
*Tempest-Tost* as a stage play but, having grown at least somewhat disillusioned with the prospect
of having more of his writing “quite badly done” in production he opted to “try it as a novel”
(Davies in Skelton Grant 326). That he was writing the novel at the same time he submitted his
“Theatre” entry to the Massey commission was clearly no mere coincidence. Although Richard
Rose’s stage adaptation appeared at the Stratford Festival, that “highly professionalized” theatre
(MacKay 11), in the first year of the new millennium, it did little to update views of
nonprofessionalized practice.

Rose follows Davies’s plot faithfully and leaves in much of the dialogue verbatim. He
also resets all of the scenes in Mr. Webster’s backyard and shed and allocates a number of the
narrator’s choice observations to the characters themselves (particularly when Hector speaks
soliloquies from passages given initially by the narrator). But Rose introduces a number of new
scenes as well, and these scenes take familiar connotations of amateur practice a step further.
Notably, Rose adds several rehearsal scenes and resets several events so that they are played
during rehearsals.38 By staging certain of the fabula’s events during rehearsals of *The Tempest,*

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38 While they are rehearsing the opening storm scene, Nellie’s husband Roscoe (assigned by
Rose to play Sebastian) interrupts in order to encourage Nellie to laugh with him at “you
whoreson insolent Noyse-maker” and other of his character’s insults (45); while they are arguing
about swordplay they are in the midst of rehearsing the end of I.ii (48); when Solly and Roger
fight it is not in Solly’s home but on the rehearsal grounds (55); Vambrace speaks Prospero’s
Rose eliminates cumbersome scene changes and foregrounds the applicability of the play to its Shakespearean Festival venue. But he also more closely draws the company’s amateur antics—these are the “funniest scenes of the play” according to one reviewer (Hoile *n.pag*)—into their practice of theatre while juxtaposing them with the work of Shakespeare: the “genius” of the latter sets in relief the incompetence of the former. In other words, where Davies exposes most of his characters’ odd mannerisms outside of rehearsal, Rose shows them drawn directly into the practice of their art, influencing one another. In Rose’s refiguring, even more than Davies’s original text, not only is Valentine a professional in art and life, but the amateur practitioner is amateur both on and off stage. There is no need to show art as separate from life because in the context of amateur practice the two, we learn, are analogous.

A professional playwright, director and artistic director, Rose holds substantial theatre experience and cultural capital. Apparent in Stratford’s selection and Rose’s reworking of Davies’s classic is a view of nonprofessionalized theatre practice as represented by professional theatre practice. The stage adaptation presumes that the positionings of and relationships between nonprofessionalized and professional theatre remained static during the second half of the twentieth century. That passages articulating nonprofessionalized practice may be repeated verbatim at a major North American repertory company fifty years later and without question indicates a pull in professional circles to articulate a static discourse for nonprofessionalized practice, even—or especially—in the production context of a new-millennium retrospective on Davies as Canadian culture icon, as performed at Canada’s iconic theatre institution. This

IV.i lines to Ferdinand as Mrs. Wildfang attempts to prompt him, to comedic start-stop effect (61); and Vambrace practices his “If thou do’st break her virgin-knot” speech directly after Pearl is warned about Roger’s womanizing, thus mirroring the Pearl/Tasset relationship with the Miranda/Ferdinand relationship (63). Moreover, in Rose’s version, opening night features torrential rains, the blowing out of a light (82) and the breaking of the bottles on which Hector stands when attempting to hang himself; all are made audible to the audience during Prospero’s “Our Revels are now ended” speech (IV.i).
strategy asserts that the rightful place of nonprofessionalized practice is in the pre-
professionalized past. Davies’s amateurs can be no different than Roses’s. Like Cohen-Cruz’s
amateur colleagues, Salterton’s amateurs are no different than all amateurs, for all time. Viewed
in this light, the discourse of nonprofessionalized theatre practice in relation to professional
theatre practice is seen to have a socially reproduced history.
Summary: Nonprofessionalized Theatre, from Mythology to Practice

Cultural fields organize themselves by defining an area considered to be a “profession”; the remaining space is “amateur.” Their opposition is the struggle to legitimize tastes that can be read across the discursive histories of theatre practice. The areas occupied by the two spaces change over the history of the field. Historically, where the majority of the field begins as a nonprofessionalized space, under the appropriate conditions a profession emerges. Its expanding membership encourages annexation across the field. In order to consecrate an exclusivist profession, producers and consumers legitimize aesthetic tastes and production and reception practices. Members of the profession begin to see their space as a *mise en abyme* that stands in for the entire field; they see nonprofessionalized space as extraneous and even an active agent that threatens the profession. Those who have earned the right through training and perseverance to be paid to practice their craft are considered to constitute not only the paramount position in the field, but indeed the field itself—analogous to the “theatre community”—by way of pervasive complicity in their restricted field of production. This unified and exclusivist view allows the theatre profession to discipline not only its own production and reception practices, but also the wider field of production and reception, at the same time that it excludes external artists from entering the profession through various selection mechanisms. Conversely, nonprofessionalized theatres relate to their local communities by creating a participatory, relational community into which creative citizens can channel their performance interests, primarily with the goals of their own theatre and their own aspirations in mind. They do not discipline the field of theatre to the same extent, and this is why, in part, they have been left out of the wider discourse of theatre. These constitutive dynamics contribute to animosity between
professional and nonprofessional factions. Scholars and practitioners at professional and nonprofessionalized theatres alike are complicit in marginalizing nonprofessionalized practice, particularly by seeking to appropriate the term “community” for one practice or another, and in general by replicating and reproducing inherited views of nonprofessionalized practice as amateurish, and professionalizing practice as more legitimated.

The borderlands between nonprofessionalized and professional practice frequently become sites of contestation despite evidence that the profession would not have been possible at its outset without its nonprofessionalized roots, and sustainable without its contemporary nonprofessionalized counterparts. Historically, the space of any given field may at one point be dominated by professional practice, and at other points dominated by nonprofessionalized practice. This domination is normally a question of the degree to which the artistic field holds influential cultural capital among other fields: when cultural capital is higher in the field, professional practice is dominant; when the cultural capital is lower in the field, nonprofessionalized practice is dominant.

Every modern culture has within it an amateur spirit, even if its drive toward professionalization is pervasive. Where past critics envisioned a twentieth century where the more valuable attitudes of professional and nonprofessionalized practices might be combined, critics now, having seen the negative economic and cultural effects of extreme professionalization in entertainment fields, are envisioning a “pro-am” combination for the twenty-first century. The continuum model of creative practice allows us to view creative practices as made up of a variety of attitudes, skill sets and socially understood values bearing both professional and amateur qualities. In a sense, these critics construct “amateur” as an inoculation to combat the adverse symptoms brought on by the impersonal and systemic aspects
of professionalization. They see the desirable elements of the amateur spirit not as replacing the desirable elements of professional practice, or even as competing with them, but commingling with them as hybrid pro-am practice.

In the field of theatre, nonprofessionalized practice continues, and in important instances flourishes, in spite of and indeed alongside, professional practice. A productive vocabulary generated out of a critical, case-study-based discourse analysis of the space of nonprofessionalized theatre practice will go some distance in redressing and rearticulating the productive work of nonprofessional practitioners in the field of theatre. This theoretical- and document-based framework will outline co-supportive relations between two long-standing nonprofessionalized companies in order to contextualize perceived local supremacies and dynamics between professional and nonprofessionalized theatres.

Nonprofessionalized theatre companies like the two in this study problematize the central tenets and structural “neatnesses” of the histories of artistic fields of production. They repeatedly produce new works and new artists at the same time that they produce traditional, post-Broadway plays and plays enshrined in the canon. They produce contrapuntally with professional companies with great frequency. Yet because taste is pervasive across the field of production and consumption, both specialist theatre producers and non-specialist theatre consumers—who may be professionals in their own fields—have marginalized nonprofessionalized theatre. In the twentieth century, the idea of professionalization spread like a contagion among diverse occupations; the arts sector was not immune.
Part II

Two Nonprofessionalized Theatres and the Field of Cultural Production

It has been nearly a century since the start of the War to End All Wars. During the modern era Canadians have made several efforts to jump-start a “national theatre.” As Canada’s largest urban centre, Toronto has been involved in most of these attempts—the Little Theatre Movement, the planning and building of regional theatres, the alternative theatre movement and the Fringe theatre phenomenon. Importantly, Toronto’s Alumnae Theatre Company and Edmonton’s Walterdale Theatre Associates have not simply played reactionary witness to these landmark “movements,” but as theatre groups working outside of the profession they have been active participants, and at times catalysts, in repeatedly redefining local theatre practice, sometimes inspired by (and inspiring with) foreign plays, other times producers of premieres, several of them award-winning.

Claimed by critics in their respective cities variously as the only companies committed to offering the ignored classics, the moderns, the theatre of the absurd and new Canadian plays—in other words “experimental works”—Alumnae and Walterdale have frequently challenged expectations of what the Toronto and Edmonton theatre communities are capable of producing and what Toronto’s and Edmonton’s populations are willing to attend. Along the way, and despite location changes, Alumnae was the first theatre company to own its own building in Toronto, while Walterdale was the first theatre group (outside of the University of Alberta) to inhabit a building dedicated to its own productions. With moments of remarkable foresight, both have shifted their public identities to adapt to the needs of theatre programming in their cities.
Yet, as this study illustrates, Alumnae and Walterdale also provide a study in contrast among amateur theatre practices. Born forty years apart, they are products of different cultural experiences. For example, the first initially intended to help raise funds for campus war veterans and capital building projects, while the latter sought to provide its community with a pre-professional theatre it could support. The varied places of gender politics in nonprofessionalized theatre production are evident: Alumnae, even to this day, counts only women among its members, though a handful of prominent male “guests” have had no small hand in influencing the programming and personnel choices of the company; conversely, Walterdale membership has never been limited to one sex, yet until the early 1980s influence and leadership came mainly from men (with the exception of Micky MacDonald during the 1960s). And whereas the founders of both theatres were, for the most part, not uncomfortably off—that is, they could afford the spare leisure time to produce theatre either by inherited or personally earned income—the differences between the social climates of Toronto at the conclusion of the First World War and Edmonton post-Canada Council are evident in any discussion of each theatre’s early years. Indeed, the following studies indicate greater disparities between (only two) amateur companies and their practices than previous scholarship admits.
Chapter 4

“Intellectual Theatre”:
Purpose and Programming at Toronto’s Alumnae Theatre Company

To me, it [Alumnae] is a model in every respect of what an amateur theatre organization should be. The members love the theatre devotedly and unselfishly. They are pace-setters for the entire Toronto theatrical community, with high standards of play choice and production and a purposeful artistic aim.

That aim is to do plays—current, Canadian, and classical—because of their intrinsic merit, or because they have been neglected, or because they express the shifting winds of theatrical expression, or because their authors have something to say which they think deserves to be heard. The plays are not done to cash in on a prevailing fashion, or to beg comparison with professionals, or to win prizes in the Dominion Drama Festival, or simply to show off. In a very real sense, I would say, they are the best promoters we have of the larger idea of theatre.


This chapter seeks to analyse play programming at Toronto’s Alumnae Theatre Company, primarily at the macro-level of decade-long trends, and secondarily at the micro-level of season-by-season choice. In order to do so, the chapter is divided chronologically at moments of significant change for the company, when change of location precipitated change in programming. It argues that Alumnae’s founding personnel set deeply rooted, institutionalized class- and education-based assumptions of what the company would produce, and the delineation of highly-flexible parameters that would ultimately allow for variety and longevity. Moreover, with the aid of complicit and influential theatre critics, Alumnae’s choices frequently filled gaps and even led the way for programming that was not otherwise addressed in the city. These choices, in turn, have deeply influenced the idea of “modern” and “alternative” play production in Toronto. They are ultimately products of the company’s adept position-taking within the city’s emerging restricted field of theatre production.
In order to follow this line of argument, I employ Bourdieu’s concepts of the wider field of cultural production and the restricted field of production to argue that taste, as a product of educational capital and inculcated at three of Toronto’s post-secondary and finishing schools, led to define Alumnae Theatre’s early and emergent programming choices. In *Composing Ourselves*, Dorothy Chansky argues that as amateur theatre practice grew in the 1920s, so too did attention to studying and practising theatre in the education system (Chansky 149). Moreover, drama education became largely the domain of women who were trained and employed as high school drama teachers or elocution instructors (Chansky 150). In Toronto, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, women undergraduates at the University of Toronto, who would go on to found Alumnae Theatre, were taught performance in the early manifestations of these environments, with the dual purpose of self-improvement and social justice (as discussed below, their performances raised money for wartime “patriotic purposes,” women’s buildings and other campus initiatives). Starting a theatre group that could raise funds for social causes might be, like teaching high school or post-secondary drama, “a respectable endeavour for those from the social class that comprised most college students” (Chansky 151). Their education gave them both the instinct and the acumen for initiatives that would constitute, to a significant extent, Toronto’s theatre field before, and as, it professionalized.

Alumnae Theatre Company is the longest-running theatre company in Toronto, and the second longest-running English-speaking theatre company in Canada (after the Ottawa Little Theatre). It is a not-for-profit, nonprofessionalized community theatre group that has produced plays since 1918. Currently, each season it produces four mainstage shows and one new works festival called New Ideas, as well as various performances and readings in its smaller upstairs space. Throughout the year the company rents its facilities to other groups. Across nine decades
it has produced at least fifty-seven play premieres (of which at least twenty-two are world
premieres, eleven are first performances in Canada and twenty-four are first performances in
Toronto). The New Ideas Festival has accounted for hundreds of additional one-act world
premieres since 1989. It has remained consistently solvent by balancing its production appetite
with income from membership fees, rentals and box office as well as labour from “immense
volunteer assistance” (Halpenny “University” 574). It has never been eligible for government
programming grants, a fact that has likely given it greater freedom of choice in programming.

Today, Alumnae’s threefold mandate is “to produce works that offer strong roles for
women; to produce works that are not often seen in Toronto; and to produce works that are
written by Canadians” (“Alumnae Theatre”). Since 1972 the company has been located in the
former Firehall No. 4 at 70 Berkeley Street near Adelaide in Toronto’s Corktown
neighbourhood. Plays are suggested for production by the Production Committee to the eleven-
member Board of Directors, each elected from the company membership—numbering about
one-hundred-and-fifty—at an Annual General Meeting. Whereas at Walterdale Theatre
Associates, for example, “membership” does not require participation, at Alumnae all paying
members are, by definition, active participants in the production of plays and/or the running of
the company. Men who work on Alumnae productions are considered “guests”; all “members”—
as has been true since Alumnae’s founding—are women.

Though it produces theatre primarily in a nonprofessionalized capacity, Alumnae has
paid certain directors and actors, as when it occasionally hires or casts Equity members. In this
sense its theatre operations are nonprofessionalized and its members “pursu[e] theatre as an
avocational interest” (UADC Membership 1980), though in order to negotiate inherited negative
connotations of “amateur,” it sometimes refers to itself publicly as a “semi-professional
producing theatre” (Alumnae 2001). One membership flyer explains, “While encouraging professionalism and welcoming the assistance and participation of professionals, the Club is primarily non-professional. We all volunteer our skills at the Alumnae” (UADC Membership 1980). This seemingly ambivalent terminology—volunteer, avocational, non-professional, semi-professional—is largely a matter of responding to changing circumstances at different moments, often from production to production. It allows the company flexibility when encountering emerging casting and hiring conditions in order to provide opportunities to a range of interested practitioners. This flexibility serves its programming choices and helps to address gaps in the city’s theatre programming.

**Antecedents: The Benevolent Femmes Savantes of 1918**

In Molière’s *Les Femmes Savantes*, Armande’s opening diatribe to her sister Henriette against the latter’s “vulgar plan” (9) to marry provides insights into the early purposes of Alumnae Theatre Company:

So, treating sense and substance with contempt,  
Devote yourself to mind alone, as we do.  
You have our mother for your perfect model,  
Whom all men honour with the name of learned;  
Try, then, like me, to prove yourself her daughter;  
Aspire to show a like intelligence,  
And learn to feel those raptures exquisite  
Which love of study pours through every vein.  
Nay, scorn to be the slave of some mere man,  
Be wedded, sister, to philosophy […]. (11)

A group of women graduates from University College at the University of Toronto, who had recently joined the U. C. Alumnae Association (Nov 1898- ), founded the theatre group to present, on the Friday and Saturday evenings of February 15 and 16, 1918, “a very clever
translation” of Molière’s *Les Femmes Savantes*, or *The Blue Stockings* (‘Blue’ *Globe*).

“Supervised” by Dr. Frank Home Kirkpatrick of the Toronto Conservatory School of Expression, the Friday performance played to a “big audience” (“U. C. Alumnae” *Varsity*) in the Music Hall at the Toronto (now Royal) Conservatory of Music. It was hailed in the *Varsity* student newspaper as “a distinct triumph […] which the appreciative applause of the audience confirmed” (“U. C. Alumnae” *Varsity*). In keeping with the language and tone of reviews of the day, the *Globe* noted that perfect verisimilitude in all aspects of the presentation was approached, though not completely attained:

> [T]he stage setting was capital, carrying out the eighteenth century period of the play very effectively. The dresses of the actors and actresses were also very handsome and in keeping, and, if a word of criticism must be offered, were rather better than the make-up of the players, but this is a defect that can easily be remedied before to-night’s performance. (‘Blue’ *Globe*)

As an Alumnae Association dramatic event, however, *The Blue Stockings* was not solely a well-enjoyed, nearly defect-free representation of a canonical play. When the *Varsity* concluded its review by saying, “Altogether the success of the play reflects great credit on the Alumnae Association and on the distinguished patronage under which it was produced” (“U. C. Alumnae” *Varsity*), it accurately pointed to the fact that the group’s public roots lay within an educated U. of T. elite. The newest members of the U. C. Alumnae Association were involved in more than a

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39 *Les Femmes Savantes* is elsewhere translated as *The Learned Women*.
40 Unless appearing in the Women’s section as a social function, *Globe* theatre and music reviews between 1898 and 1924 were authored by E. R. Parkhurst and were, arguably, intended for that paper’s “audience of educated and influential Torontonians” (Stuart “Critic” 96). Ross Stuart argues that in reviews of the day, “critical insight” was less apparent than “the popular pleasures and prejudices of [the] time” (Stuart “Critic” 95). Notably, the reviewer’s kind hand here in the criticism of the make-up fits well within Stuart’s, following Lawrence Mason’s, delineation of the “three distinct periods” of Parkhurst’s career, which moved from showing “little mercy” to care of the performers’ feelings in his later years (Parkhurst died in 1924) (Stuart “Critic” 97-98). It also exemplifies Stuart’s conclusion that Parkhurst’s reviews are best described by the word “but” because he “rarely took a definite stand” and “refused to impose his taste” (Stuart “Critic” 106).
public theatrical for private edification. In bringing considerable stage and organizational experience, as well as some public notoriety, to the twenty-year-old Association, eleven learned women were able to carefully plan and execute two public performances of a recognizable (and self-reflexively suitable) play for the purpose of raising post-war hospital money for university war veterans.

The play, though by no means its charitable intentions, was a conspicuous departure from the U. C. Alumnae Association’s regular activities. For nearly twenty years the Association had organized an active schedule of fundraising activities and other on-campus advocacy events, invited lectures, professional talks (on journalism, advertising, insurance sales and other increasingly popular careers for women; “Professor” Varsity), receptions, holiday gatherings, bazaars, dances and regular member and executive meetings. It had left theatre production to the undergraduate Women’s Dramatic Club of University College. But after the Great War the face of U. C. was experiencing startling changes. For one, in the 1919-20 school year nearly half of the then-record 1,030 students enrolled at the college were women, a percentage that could hardly have been imagined before 1914 (“University College enrollment” Varsity). Simply by virtue of changing demographics, the U. C. Alumnae Association would gain significance on and off campus. Its activities consistently attracted the patronage of U. of T. president Robert Falconer and his wife. Though the Association remained committed to women’s advocacy, it expanded its awareness and fundraising activities to causes such as assisting university war veterans and, later, building campus infrastructure. Thus, The Blue Stockings, the Association’s first dramatic production, was presented “in aid of” patients at the University Base Hospital, recently established at Col. Vincent Massey’s unfinished Hart House. Other post-war Alumnae
Association ventures included public measures to boost awareness of the value of returning U. of T. graduates to local businesses and industries (“Assisting” Star).

The Blue Stockings was the first of four-dozen productions by the Association over the next twenty years that would benefit campus fundraising, particularly the Women’s Building Fund. As the Varsity reported,

The cessation of war activities has left the Alumnae Association free to pursue a campaign which it has long had in prospect, and it is indeed gratifying to the undergraduates, to know that their cause is being championed, and that new buildings for University College women, is the main concern of those, who having experienced all the discomforts of over-crowding are unwilling that others coming after them should be similarly handicapped. (“First” Varsity)

Ultimately, monies raised from ticket sales for its annual production and from the social networking that these and other smaller productions encouraged went toward a women’s library endowment. However, the path of this money was circuitous even as it serves to exemplify the organizational aptitude of the Association’s women. In February 1920 it was announced that the chief concern of the Alumnae Association’s Building Committee was to raise $500,000 for a dedicated U. C. Women’s Union (“U. C. women” Varsity). $400,000 would come from the “friends of the college,” $95,000 from the Alumnae themselves and $5000 from the students. Several of the Association’s core theatre-makers attended organizational meetings for the Building Fund, including Margaret Boyle (Martin), Marion Squair, Elspeth Wilson and Agnes Muldrew (Stone) (“New women’s” Mail). However, in 1922 a U. C. Women’s Union building was obtained by other means\(^1\) and the Association decided to redirect the $12,000 already raised

\(^1\) U. of T. purchased the late Senator Frederic Thomas Nicholls’s property at 79 St. George Street, now home to the U. C. Drama Program and the Helen Gardiner Phelan Playhouse. After much debate, it was decided that this money, and the $100,000 required to renovate the building, would not come from the Alumnae Association’s Building Fund because a provincial grant could be obtained. (“New Buildings” Varsity; “Alumnae open” Mail; “University College Women’s” Star; “U. C. Alumnae” Monthly)
toward other purposes. By February 1931 this amount had more than doubled to $25,000 and was considered for use “towards the furnishings of the new University College women’s residence” (“$25,000” Varsity). But finally, in November 1932, with the amount increased to $40,000, the Association donated the funds toward the founding of an endowment library at the new U. C. Women’s Residence, Whitney Hall, just north of the Women’s Union. Reported the Varsity, “It lacks the richness of the Hart House library, but it is quite inviting” (“Floreat!” Varsity; “Alumnae gift” Varsity). Though it did not hit its target, the U. C. Alumnae Association proved it could muster some of Toronto’s wealthiest, or at least most connected, patrons and patronesses to their causes, directly or indirectly, through the performance of plays. Alumnae documents cite early Alumnae Dramatic Club performances alone as raising over $3000 for a number of University projects and funds, including the University College Women’s Building Fund ($1,557 between 1922 and 1930), the Carillon of Bells for the Memorial Tower ($150 in 1927), the University College Alumnae Scholarship Fund ($350 in 1930) and the University Settlement$42 ($1,136 between 1934 and 1940) (UADC “History” 1945, 4-5; UADC Newsletter, 42 I defer to Cathy L. James for an explanation of Settlements:
Settlements resist definition, partly because of their insistence on remaining responsive to the needs of their local clientele. Generally speaking, the settlement was part middle-class residence, part social welfare agency, part recreation centre, and part cultural outpost in the slums. The residential aspect of the settlement house was its most unique characteristic; movement leaders insisted that at least some “settlers” had actually to live in or near the premises in order for an institution to be considered a settlement. Settlement workers had to be neighbours, not merely visitors, in “neglected” districts. (James 50)
They were some of “the few institutions in the city to offer respectable, secular recreation to working-class women” outside of church socials, theatre or vaudeville (James 54). James gives brief nod to the “important parallels to Western imperialist colonization” in the language and structure of “settlements” (James 50 fn 9).
The U. of T. University Settlement dealt with nearby areas of need and had connections to college chapters of the YWCA, as did some prominent members of the U. C. Alumnae Association Dramatic Club, including Agnes Muldrew. As James goes on to note that the skills required to facilitate Settlement activities were taught at the Toronto Conservatory of Expression
1). In these first two decades the Association’s theatre-makers provided a vehicle for gathering the wealthy Toronto elite together, near or on campus, to generate income at the cost of fifty cents or a dollar per ticket, or better yet larger donations sociably arranged pre- or post-show. It took a group of skilled, articulate and highly motivated women to manage this fundraising.

But the women who made up the cast of *The Blue Stockings* had already made names for themselves as both actors and undergraduate organizers on campus. They were, of course, graduates of U. C. and several had occupied student society executive positions at a time when alumnae associations kept close connections to their affiliate undergraduate leaders. Most had been active members of the Women’s Dramatic Club and four had served as president of various campus societies (“Alumnae of U. C.” *Varsity*). A closer look at the Club’s history and its members sheds light on the origins of Alumnae Theatre Company.

The Women’s Dramatic Club of University College (WDC) (1905-21), a predecessor to today’s co-ed U. C. Players Guild (1923-), was founded as an offshoot of the U. C. Women’s Literary Society (1891-1930s), in large measure to bring off the page the classic dramas studied in literature classes at the University.\(^{43}\) By 1915 the *Varsity* referred to it as one of the best “amateur societies” in the city (“Drama” *Varsity*)\(^ {44}\) and in 1917 as comprised of “players […]”

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\(^{43}\) One review in the *Varsity* began, “the production of *The School for Scandal* [Jan 1917] by the Women’s Dramatic Club proved that this epoch-making play is more than merely a comedy of wit with conventional types. Its charm is, indeed, in the lights and shades of human nature.” It concluded the Club “merits indeed the gratitude of all students of literature for reviving one of the most elaborate comedies of all time” (“School” *Varsity*).

\(^{44}\) The *Varsity* listed just two other dramatic groups at the University: the Players Club, which produced “modern” plays and would become the resident company at Hart House Theatre, and the Faculty of Education Dramatic Association, which “ranges at will through the fields of drama” (“Drama” *Varsity*). Apparently these (and others) produced sporadically because the
competing almost with those of professional companies” (“Review” *Varsity*). Despite these lofty public standards, in its early years the WDC “still [held] allegiance to her mother society” (*Torontonensis 1908* 329). This was true insomuch as its membership belonged to the club so that they could extend their interest in literature to “outward expression.” As the WDC described itself in 1908,

> The Dramatic Club expresses the wish of the women of University College to develop the outward expression of their education, rather than to allow it to remain within, or to be badly expressed. The primary aim of the Club is voice culture, with the physical poise which attends it; while the secondary, if not equal, aim is dramatic expression. (*Torontonensis 1908* 329)

Comprised of young women with a modern interest in personal and social improvement by way of training in public speaking and poise, the WDC, in its early years, found fruitful connections with the nearby Margaret Eaton School of Expression and its founder Mrs. Emma Scott Raff. Since 1903, Scott Raff had been offering classes to the U. C. Women’s Literary Society (Murray “Making” 43). By 1908 the Club was holding early evening meetings once a week at the Eaton School under Scott Raff’s direction starting in October each year, just a couple of weeks after the first semester began (in 1908, for example, their first class began Monday 21 October at 4:30pm). The women would meet, study and rehearse a Shakespearean comedy (specifically *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado about Nothing* or *Midsummer Nights Dream*) with Scott Raff before it was, as explained in a posted notice to interested U. C. women, “given at the end of the term [to show] the progress made in the study of voice culture and dramatic technique” (“Dramatic club” *Varsity*). These one-night performances attracted the attention of not only the following year the *Varsity* called the WDC “the only dramatic organization existing at present” (“Much Ado” *Varsity* 1916).

45 In his ubiquitous dissertation on early twentieth-century amateur theatre in Toronto, Robert Scott notes the U. C. Women’s Literary Society “was one of the first university organizations on the continent linking a formal drama course with theatrical activities (Scott 68).
Varsity—which, early on, remarked on “the efficient and sympathetic training of Mrs. Scott-Raff” (“Women’s Dramatic” *Torontoensis* 1908 329)—but also Toronto’s daily newspapers, while filling the Eaton School’s Greek Theatre “to overflowing” (“Twelfth Night” *Varsity*), even turning people away (“Women’s Literary” *Mail*). Audiences came not only from the families of the young women attending University College and the Eaton School, but also the patronesses whose names frequented the dailies’ society pages in notices about the plays.

The relationship between the WDC’s early theatre-related inclinations on the one hand, and the Margaret Eaton School of Expression’s aims of developing women in oratory and poise on the other, began in 1905, and was likely fairly complex. For example, as Heather Murray argues, the Eaton School may be listed alongside the Arts and Letters Club and Hart House as a Toronto institution that “sustained interest in and promot[ed] national theatre movements [which] helped to develop a conceptual base for the ‘nativist’ English-Canadian theatre to follow” (Murray “Making” 40). Its early focus as “a dramatic and literary academy” contributed to “creating the preconditions for both the actors and audiences of the little theatre movement” by way of its own Associate Players and its auditorium, the Greek Theatre (Murray “Making” 40). Murray also credits the Eaton School with “help[ing] to generate that sense of the ‘modern’ through which the productions of the little theatre movement would be produced and received [and as part of modernization] the assertion and creation of women’s place in the theatrical world at a time when their participation was often discouraged and even denounced” (Murray “Making” 40-41). As Maria Tippet describes, the Eaton School, one among several at the time, offered “what some pejoratively referred to as the acquisition of ‘ornamental skills’” (Tippet 38). The term is the same employed by Robertson Davies’s Humphrey Cobbler and it provides a connection that explicates the WDC’s association with the Eaton School: we might say that the
ornamental skills offered by the school were deeply resonant with the intentions of amateur practice in the first half of the last century.

Scott Raff trained at the Toronto Conservatory’s dramatic art department under H. N. Shaw (Murray “Making” 41), whose textbooks she may have shared in her own teachings later on (Murray “Making” 42). At U. of T. she attended Victoria College and may also have attended University College for a time (Murray “Making” 54 fn 8). Much stronger were her ties with Victoria College, where she lived at Annesley Hall as director of physical education for women until 1913 while teaching Victoria College students at the Eaton School in its early years (Murray “Making” 42). She taught at a time when it was common for well-bred young women to take elocution courses in Canada. Tippet describes the common type of instructor:

> They wore tight-bodiced, ankle-length, leg-of-mutton-sleeved dresses and presided over closed-off parlours and dining-rooms. If they had the right connections or the money, they taught in studios that were located above stores, in church or community hall basements, or in the backs of their husband’s or father’s offices. (Tippet 38)

Though she did indeed open her own practice in a meager second-story studio before attracting the attention (and ongoing funding) of Margaret Eaton, by many accounts Scott Raff possessed atypical capacities.46 Still, it is unlikely that she would have taught any of the founding U. C. Alumnae Association’s Dramatic Club members at the Eaton School until she began to work with the WDC again in 1918-19 and 1919-20 under her new married name, Mrs. George

46 Scott Raff’s influence upon important Canadian culture-makers is a matter of record. Along with student and financial underwriter Margaret Eaton (Timothy Eaton’s wife), Dora Mavor (Moore) was probably the School’s most prominent student participant (1909-11), and later instructor, having played Rosalind and Olivia in the School’s WDC productions of As You Like It (Feb 1908) and Twelfth Night (Jan 1909) respectively while she was a student at (but who did not graduate from) University College. See Murray (“Making” 47-49) and Sperdakos (32-33). Bertram Forsyth resigned his position as director at Hart House to become art director at the Eaton School in 1925.
Nasmith. She then worked with the Women’s Dramatic Club of Victoria College during the 1920s. As would soon become clear, the U. C. Alumnae Association’s Dramatic Club, like the WDC, had strong roots in Scott Raff’s methods and philosophies, notably an ambitious annual public production, a literary focus, a positioning against commercial theatre and a participatory core of women.

But in the fall of 1911 the WDC moved from under Scott Raff’s supervision to that of Dr. Frank Home Kirkpatrick at the Toronto Conservatory School of Expression, where Kirkpatrick was Principal (1905-19). Murray suggests that Scott Raff’s “increasing duties at the School” may have made it impossible for her to continue working with WDC and others at the time (Murray “Making” 43). A preview piece in the *Varsity* provides further details on the group’s move from the Eaton School to the Conservatory. On the day of the WDC’s first production under Kirkpatrick’s supervision, the *Varsity* explained that

> Previously, the Women’s Dramatic Club has delivered all its productions in the Margaret Eaton School of Expression where they have restricted it to a semi-private affair. But this year, the club decided to make itself more of a University Institution, with a broader field, and the outcome is to-night’s presentation.

> The ladies […] have had a competent man [Kirkpatrick] in charge, and the result is that the production will be entirely free of any amateurishness. The past activities, indeed, have been characterized by the finished quality of the work, and this year, even better is anticipated. […] Their first offering to the University in general. (“Much Ado” *Varsity* 1912)

If it is true that the WDC was starting to widen its scope to more closely represent, and present to, the University at large, the move can be read as a moment of initiative on the part of the U. C.

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47 She directed WDC women in J. M. Barry’s *Quality Street* (Mar 1919) and Harley Granville Barker and Lawrence Housman’s *Prunella* (Mar 1920) in the Club’s third- and -second-to-last years.

48 Kirkpatrick may have grown up in Ontario but studied and taught as Professor of Oratory at Hiram College and then at Wooster University, both in Ohio, before coming to Toronto around 1904 (Lisa *Rootsweb*).
women’s club to define the value of their organization to their present circumstances. The WDC made the change appear to the university community to be a positive one. With some collegial flourish, its followers began referring to it as the “Women’s Dramatic Club of the University of Toronto” (IT3 *Varsity*). In a similar spirit of collegial competition, this move to the Conservatory, and to the stage at U. of T.’s Convocation Hall, apparently gave the student newspaper cause to anticipate less “amateurishness”—though presumably an equally “finished quality of work”—than at the Eaton School. (The contradiction exposes the statement as lacking empirical accuracy.) Indication in the change of ownership of WDC’s talents was made in the *Globe* the next morning: “The play [*Much Ado about Nothing*] was wonderfully well staged, and the University feels pride in the efforts of the ladies to make the dramatic art popular in undergraduate circles” (“Last night…” *Globe*). One unnamed WDC supporter (possibly a member) commented the following year that the location change was made “to make the play more of a University event, and also to accommodate the large audience” (IT3 *Varsity*). She (or he) went on to comment that, “it was said by many of our professors and by dramatic critics to have been the best amateur performance they had ever witnessed.” She gave the attendance for that one evening’s showing of *Much Ado about Nothing* (Mar 1912) at Convocation Hall: 1,200!

Under Kirkpatrick, the Conservatory’s aims were comparable to that of the Eaton School, focusing on the study and preparation for teaching of “Public Reading and Interpretation of Literature, The Concert Platform, Public Speaking, Dramatic Work, Physical Culture” and additionally “Classical, Folk and National Dancing” (Toronto Conservatory 1918-19 68). As at the Eaton School, the WDC’s annual public performances were highly anticipated and attended under Kirkpatrick. And occurring as they did during the War they were occasionally remounted by request at other venues, such as Guild Hall and the Technical School Hall, raising “a
substantial sum [for] patriotic purposes” (Bach 178). It was during their seven years under Kirkpatrick that the women of the WDC comprised at the very least “the dominant dramatic group on campus” (Avrill 1992 6).

Thus, from 1912 to 1916 the WDC presented an annual Shakespearean comedy in the winter under Kirkpatrick’s direction at Convocation Hall. Then, during the 1917-18 school year, Kirkpatrick supervised the WDC in a production of Sheridan’s *The Rivals* (Jan 1918) at the same time that he supervised some of his former U. C. students in the U. C. Alumnae Association’s *The Blue Stockings* (Feb 1918); the former production played just twenty-one days before the latter, both at the Hall at the Conservatory of Music. Kirkpatrick was clearly so committed to the work of graduated WDC members that he agreed to direct the Alumnae women again in Pinero’s “showbiz classic” (Libman 28) *Trelawny of the Wells* the following year (Mar 1919), also staged at the Conservatory of Music. It is possible that patriotism led Kirkpatrick to his repeated involvement with the WDC (and then Alumnae) during these years. As noted in the *Varsity* following WDC’s *A School for Scandal*, “The large amount of money which the Club realized this year for patriotic purposes proves the importance of this organization” (“Women’s Dramatic” *Varsity* Mar 1917).

Kirkpatrick left Toronto in July 1919 “to devote next year to special literary studies in the post-graduate department of Columbia University, New York” (“Prof. F. H.” *Globe*). In March 1921 the WDC presented its last production, Udall’s *Ralph Roister Doister*, at Hart House under Roy Mitchell’s direction before the club “died a natural death” (“‘Little Theatre’” *Varsity*). That same year the Toronto Conservatory, under the weight of post-war enrollment, and without Kirkpatrick, shed its School of Expression activities by encouraging students interested in such
courses to register at the nearby Margaret Eaton School, still headed by Mrs. Scott Raff (Nasmith) (Toronto Conservatory 1920-21, 67-68).

Several U. C. students, all protégées of Kirkpatrick and most either Toronto Conservatory or WDC participants, came together to found and run the Alumnae Association’s theatre group. Margaret Boyle (Martin) graduated from U. C. in 1915, appeared in the cast of the Conservatory School of Expression’s *The Romancers* (Mar 1918), Alumnae’s *The Blue Stockings* and then went on to appear in most of Alumnae’s productions until at least 1930; she was elected president of the U. C. Alumnae Dramatic Club, possibly its first, in 1923. Erskine Keys appeared in WDC’s *A School for Scandal* (Jan 1917)—where her Benjamin Backbite “was at times deliciously droll” (“School” *Varsity*)—and was president of the U. C. Women’s Literary Society (1916-17) before appearing in *The Blue Stockings, A Trip to Scarborough* (April 1921) and a number of other Alumnae offerings through to the mid-1930s. Isobel Cassidy appeared in each of WDC’s annual Shakespeare plays under Dr. Kirkpatrick’s direction from 1913 to 1916, earning such accolades as she “can take any role with distinction. Her stage presence and enunciation are always pleasing” (“Much Ado” *Varsity* 1916) before appearing in *The Blue Stockings*. Though she only appeared in *The Blue Stockings* for Alumnae, Edna Bach brought to the group at least three years of WDC acting experience (1915-17). Marjory J. F. Fraser acted in

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49 A series of political, financial and personnel decisions were made between 1918 and 1921 to connect the Toronto Conservatory of Music with the University of Toronto (“Royal”). Alumnae’s and the WDC’s use of the Conservatory’s stage from 1917 to 1919 was likely part (officially or unofficially) of these connections.

50 In her joint biography of Erskine’s father David and her aunt Florence, Heather Murray notes that Erskine (named after her mother) became a social worker (Murray “Doubled” 1021). Her father, writes Murray, kept a busy social life in Toronto with engagements “seemingly every night of the week” and her parents frequently featured in the daily papers as “entertaining students in their home for a conversazione with musical interludes” (1021). And as her father shared a maternal grandmother with Margaret Eaton, Erskine was Margaret Eaton’s younger cousin (1021).
WDC productions (1913 and 1914), serving as its president in 1913-14 before acting in *The Blue Stockings*, her only Alumnae production. Isobel Jones was a WDC member for just one year (1914-15) (though she did not, apparently, act), the president of the Women’s Literary Society of U. C. (1916-17) and the president of the University School Dramatic Society (1917) before appearing in *The Blue Stockings*, her only Alumnae production. Both Mona Clark and Helen Stewart acted in just one WDC production (1915 and 1917 respectively) before playing in *The Blue Stockings*, their only Alumnae show. Of the remaining *Blue Stockings* cast, Nora Mortimer, Jessica Reid and Mrs. M. E. Laughton had apparently not been members of the WDC and of them, only Laughton stayed on with Alumnae to act in *Trelawny of the Wells* and *The Charity the Begins at Home* (Apr 1924). It was this group of women who chose to present *The Blue Stockings* from their readings as undergraduates, a scholastic trend that would continue for at least the following three years (Halpenny 1970, 1). *The Blue Stockings* production marked a significant point at which the growing talents of a cluster of recent female graduates coalesced within the needs of the Alumnae Association. It was these women who brought their talents to bear on a series of important campus fundraising projects (“Lady” *Mail*; “Blue” *Globe*).

Along with Boyle (Martin) and Keys, a number of U. C. graduates joined the Club during the next few years and, if their acting credits with the group are any indication, formed its nucleus during the first two decades. Those with WDC experience who stayed on with the Alumnae Dramatic Club include Elspeth Wilson (WDC 1913; Alumnae 1924-37); Margaret Tytler (WDC 1914-17; Alumnae 1921-39), whose Mrs. Candour was “ebulliently vivacious” (*School*’ *Varsity*) and whose Dogberry “was a triumph [as she] kept the audience in roars of laughter with her torrents of eloquence” (*Much Ado* *Varsity* 1916); Agnes Muldrew (Stone) (WDC 1915-18; Alumnae 1921-56); Marion Squair (WDC 1917-18; Alumnae 1922-28), who
rendered Sir Oliver in A School for Scandal “exceptionally well” ("School" Varsity); and Agatha Leonard (WDC 1918; Alumnae 1923-37). Leonard, after graduating from U. C. in 1921, served as treasurer of the U. C. Alumnae Association in 1923 and then as chairman in 1930-31.

Importantly, she made an extant list of the Club’s early production records. Many of these women also participated in other dramatic and literary groups while they were students at U. C., particularly the Women’s Literary Society, which, itself, occasionally presented readings and short plays. Collectively they carried over “enviable records in the dramatic club of undergraduate days” (“U. C. Alumnae” Varsity) while proving to be consistent student leaders at U. C., the two skill sets merging, no doubt, in their oratory training under Dr. Kirkpatrick. With proven acting and organizational abilities they were no doubt familiar to the U. C. Alumnae while they were still students, and to the theatre and fundraising patrons it hoped to attract.51

In addition, a few early Alumnae members apparently did not participate in the WDC, though upon graduation from U. C. they took up long-term involvement with Alumnae. These were Christina (Cooper) Templeton (1919-56), Edna Norwich (1919-39) and Mary Smart (1921-56). Also of note are Mabel Child (WDC 1915-18), who brought a great deal of student administrative experience to Alumnae—and whose Charles in the WDC’s A School for Scandal “was interpreted with vigour and yet admirable restraint” (“School” Varsity)—before appearing in Trelawny of the Wells (Mar 1919) and A Trip to Scarborough; and Adeline Lobb (WDC 1917), who was heavily involved in the U. C Women’s Lit Soc (1913-17) before acting in only two Alumnae one-acts: two productions of The Twelve Pound Look (Oct 1923, Feb 1924) and

51 As an example of Alumnae’s close ties with these undergraduate organizations, in particular the actresses among them, Muldrew, Squair, Lobb and Child were described at one point as “a cast of graduates” who “earned our gratitude by their [the U. C. Women’s Literary Society] finished and spirited presentation of Shaw’s The Man of Destiny.” “That affairs might be brought to a proper consummation, the final meeting [of the Women’s Lit] was placed in the hands of the Alumnae.” (“Women’s Literary” Torontonensis)
one of Hop-o’-My Thumb (Oct 1924). Other early participants of note include Patricia Godfrey and Grace Matthews, both of whom “graduated from the Alumnae to the professional theatre” (UADC “History” 1945, 6). Tytler, Norwich and Eleanor Barton (Woodside) in particular became “very well-known in Little Theatre circles” (UADC “History” 1945, 7), while Eleanor Norton (Beecroft) and Florrie Hunt were also familiar in these early years.

Alumnae’s founding members were educated and ambitious women, active in both drama and committee work at U. C. prior to their involvement with the Alumnae Association. Several transferred this experience to Alumnae for a decade or two. As long-time member Frances Halpenny notes,

> The original Alumnae of the 20’s and 30’s were women in the professions or wives to whom their university life had meant much. They were readers; they went to touring plays at the Royal Alexandra and saw theatre in London and New York. They built connections with the little theatre of Hart House and they had many links with the Arts and Letters Club. [T]hey themselves sold tickets and sponsored Theatre Nights, a necessity that had an influence on repertoire. (Alumnae 2001, 1-2)

Halpenny’s words, it should not be surprising, resonate with those of feminist scholar Kym Bird when the latter describes the Canadian women who wrote their own dramas in the decades before Boyle (Martin), Keys, Cassidy, Bach and the others formed the Alumnae Dramatic Club. Writes Bird, “Educated, often well-married, employed in the professions [with] opportunity, instruction and moxie [t]hey were white, often middle and upper class of Anglo- and Irish-descent, and identified with the cultural elite of their societ[y]” (Bird 13). But whereas Bird sees “gender oppression” (Bird 13) as a motivating factor in early women playwrights’ work, Halpenny locates Alumnae’s “moxie” more directly in their education, connections, savvy work ethic and pervasive interest in experiencing theatre on and off campus. Later, influential member Molly Thom, however, characterized the group’s beginnings in a 1978 interview for Scene
Changes magazine in the context of “women’s liberation” when “women were being emancipated and they wanted to do their own thing” (qtd in Pritchard 10).52

The notoriety that the WDC earned during the 1910s is worth closer scrutiny. By 1911, Scott Raff’s last year with the group until after the War, the Varsity could write with some bravado that,

The Women’s Dramatic Club of University College is a growing institution. Their annual performance […] showed a development in the art of those taking part over last year’s work. The play was most thoroughly enjoyed by an audience that filled every available foot of space in theatre. (‘Women’s Dramatic…’ Telegram)

For a daily paper to call a campus club an “institution,” as the campus Varsity would do the following year, suggests that just a few years into existence WDC was becoming more than the sum of its parts. It meant something to the university that every year a group of undergraduate women could not only improve their theatre and public speaking training but that they could present their work to a public (and the dailies’ critics) “who filled every available foot of space in theatre” (Telegram 3 Feb 1911). In its review of A Midsummer Nights Dream (Feb 1915), the Varsity went so far as to commend the WDC on their ability to manage their student schedules: “When the fact is considered that those taking part were all amateurs and busy college women with many demands upon their time, too much appreciation cannot be expressed for their work and for an enjoyable evening” (“Midsummer Nights” Varsity). By devoting the proceeds from its

52 The fact that these were multi-talented and ambitious women working at a time when public ambition was normally reserved for men was not entirely overlooked, however. Of the WDC’s production of Twelfth Night (Feb 1913) at Convocation Hall, where there were no stage curtains, the Varsity reported that, “Much amusement was caused by the occasional changes of scenery made in front of the audience. Apparently we have the suffragette stage carpenter with us also” (“Twelfth Night” Varsity). Cassidy and Wilson were among the cast as Sir Toby Belch and Olivia respectively.

Apparently, a motivating factor in the WDC production’s move from Convocation Hall to the Conservatory’s Hall in Jan 1917 was that when the group began producing Sheridan plays they required a “drop-curtain” for scene changes (“Women’s Dramatic” Varsity Jan 1917).
productions to “patriotic purposes,” for example the University battalion and the Franco-British Aid Society, the women of the WDC were preparing themselves (and being prepared) for a public life outside of the traditional domestic sphere, something that would become increasingly important during and after the war years.

In this regard, “see and be seen” was lost neither on the women of WDC and the Alumnae, nor local dignitaries, nor their parents whose names were listed, as was the fashion of the time, in the daily papers and the Varsity before or after WDC performances. U. of T. president Robert Falconer and Mrs. Falconer were noted to have attended many WDC and Alumnae performances, as did Lady Eaton and Casa Loma resident Mrs. Pellatt, certain professors and their wives and, presumably, the women’s family members, including “patronesses” Mrs. John Squair, Mrs. W. Barnett Cooper, Mrs. D. R. Keys, Mrs. Tytler, Mrs. Boyle and their supervisor’s wife, Mrs. Kirkpatrick. These names reflected the fiscal ecology of noncommercialized, nonprofessionalized theatre in early twentieth-century Toronto. Theatre was produced in nonprofessionalized capacities not simply as a public sign of public social capital and private economic capital, but as a public event for the exterior purpose of raising large sums of money for social (or patriotic) purposes. This was art for society’s sake and was primarily the domain of the prominent, educated women of the city.

However, the fact that the University’s most prominent theatre group was a women-only affair served in part to re-inscribe gender divisions on campus. In a front-page preview for Much Ado about Nothing (Feb 1916), the Varsity wrote of the WDC that

Its productions have always been distinguished by splendid acting, thoughtful presentation, and evidence of careful training. But, with such superlative talent and such opportunities for excellent supervision, it has always seemed to us a pity that, in a co-educational University, a society of this kind should be confined exclusively to women. (“Much Ado” Varsity 1916)
Chansky notes that the success of women in early amateur theatre was often used to reinscribe the binary “paid/outside/professional/successful (male) and “unpaid/local/amateur/inexperienced (female)” (Chansky 152). This division did not go unquestioned at U. of T. For much of the 1910s, Varsity writers strongly and repeatedly expressed the sentiment that co-educational theatre practice would be preferable to the present women-only groups at the University. As early as February 1913, just before the construction of Hart House and its theatre was arrested for the War, and the year after WDC began working with Kirkpatrick and performing at Convocation Hall, a Varsity editorial mused that though the University had “a great many comparatively inefficient dramatic associations […] composed of women exclusively [and without] co-operation between them,” there was none that deserved to inhabit the future Hart House Theatre, none that could be “a credit to our university” (“Dramatic association” Varsity). A week later, and two days before the opening of the WDC’s 1913 performance, the Varsity printed a letter in defense of the WDC against what the unnamed writer called “a most unjust, unfair, and uncalled-for comment” in describing these groups as “inefficient” and not “a credit to our university” (IT3 Varsity). Providing evidence internal to the WDC company, she (or he) asked “why the men are unsuccessful in organizing a dramatic association among themselves; and secondly, why so many men’s organizations have a deficit [whereas the WDC does not].” The writer noted that “about eighteen girls each year” run the WDC without backing from the Students’ Parliament or other “outside support,” despite the “heavy expenses” of “tuition fees and costumes.” As “the only ones who try to keep us familiar with Shakespeare,” the writer argued, the WDC deserved encouragement, not deprecation. In the same issue, the editorialist apologized “with all our hearts” and clarified that “will be a credit” referred to any co-ed
dramatic club that would produce “plays written by Toronto graduates” (my emphasis).53 The
apology concluded:

In our opinion, the drama will never become a great institution in Toronto University while the men and women remain clannishly on opposite sides of the campus. There must be co-operation. And as it would obviously be unfair to the Women’s Dramatic Club to ask it to co-operate with any of the embryonic men’s dramatic clubs, we can only call upon said men’s dramatic clubs to show some signs of life. (“Truly” Varsity)

Then, in a review of *Much Ado about Nothing* (Feb 1916) two years later, the paper again lamented that it was a “pity that, in a co-educational University, a society of this kind should be confined exclusively to women,” giving as specific example, “The acting as [sic] women as men or vice versa is, after all, at best only a remarkable tour de force,” despite “the extraordinarily clever work [of Tytler and others]” (“Much Ado” Varsity 1916). And three years later the WDC’s production of J. M. Barry’s *Quality Street* (Mar 1919) gave occasion for the Varsity to make note that another production of *Quality Street* at the same time in New Brunswick, NJ included women and urged more men to do plays, and to do them with women at U. of T.” (“Co-operation” Varsity). The WDC did not use men until it produced what turned out to be its last production, Udall’s *Ralph Roister Doister*, when director Roy Mitchell cast two men from Hart House’s resident company, the Players Club (“Ralph Roister…” Varsity).

As a growing institution under Kirkpatrick during the War (which had reduced the number of the men available to participate in campus theatre) the WDC went a long way in defining the impact that its members’ growing talents and experience could have in the public sphere. Arguably, they would not have had the confidence to contribute to Alumnae Association

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53 Curiously, the editorial responded to the fact that there were no male dramatic organizations at the University by saying, “There is one answer, which may or may not bear weight. Just possibly a woman makes a better fist at playing a male role than does a man who attempts a female part” (“Truly” Varsity).
fundraising projects by way of the stage, and elsewhere, if they had not grown as actors under Scott Raff and Kirkpatrick in annual public view in the heart of the country’s largest urban centre. Though their names have not yet been recorded in theatre history books, these women, as we shall see in the remainder of this chapter, repeatedly helped to shape the possibilities of what Toronto theatre might accomplish.

During its decade-and-a-half, the WDC was both prominent and held in high esteem for the type and quality of training it received and performances it gave. Its on-campus “leadership” set an example for amateur theatre clubs that began to form during the war years, particularly at Victoria and St. Hilda’s colleges (Averill Dramatis 4). Taking pause in his occasional Varsity column, “The Bystander,” from reviewing shows at the Princess and Royal Alexandra theatres to wax eloquently on the Club, Art Editor Merrill Denison54 wrote of the WDC’s As You Like It (Feb 1914) at Convocation Hall:

Rosalind was like a compound of essence so volatile in her nature and so exquisitely blended, that any attempt to analyze her seemed to escape me. To what can I compare her? To the silvery clouds which even while we gaze shift their hues and forms, dissolving into air, and light and beautiful showers? To some wild and beautiful melody such as some shepherd boy might “pipe to Amarillis in the shade”? Or rather to the very sunshine itself? For so her genial spirit touched into life and beauty.[…]

In conclusion, the Bystander cannot resist, adding a few words of admiration for this organization known as the Women’s Dramatic Club, under whose auspices the production was staged. The play was characterized by the absence of stars and the presence of all round competency in an unostentatious setting. What better than this could be offered to the support and encouragement of the intelligent playgoer? If the Dramatic Club continues its good work in other universities and centres of art and drama their name will ever be called to mind at the mention of Toronto University, and they will be recognized in their own Alma Mater as the greatest influence for the encouragement and cultivation of art and the drama. (“Bystander” Varsity)

54 Denison would later go one to write a number of influential early plays for Hart House theatre under Roy Mitchell.
“Good Work”: Taste, Philanthropy and the Practising Amateur

It would be a challenge to reconcile the philanthropic circumstances under which the Alumnae Association’s theatre group formed with the rhetoric associated with today’s reasons for producing theatre. For the nonprofessional practitioner of the day, the combination of familiar programming (Shakespeare, Sheridan, Molière) and societal patronage in a drama-in-education setting could draw hundreds of scholars, students and the “upper crust” to a night of theatre while contributing significantly to campus causes. The sort of theatre the WDC and Alumnae practised at the time was not aimed at strengthening a profession or creating employment for consecrated (and consecrating) artists; it was done because society needed the monetary and social rewards the groups offered. Inspired by the contemporary nationalist rhetoric of the day, when Denison spoke of his hope that the Dramatic Club “continues its good work,” he referred to both philanthropy and the improvement of a national drama. Both were, as they are today, questions of taste.

The field of cultural production within which the WDC and the Alumnae Association produced theatre bears some similarity to Denison’s description of Alumnae’s As You Like It, “characterized by the absence of stars and the presence of all round competency in an unostentatious setting” best supported by “the intelligent playgoer.” This world, however small (“embryonic” to borrow from the anthropomorphic rhetoric of subsequent scholarship), was a world of patronage, public acts of charity, personal development (of both theatre and elocution skills, that is “Ornamental Skills”) and patriotism, as well as institutional support and recruitment into all of these loci of activity. All of the institutionally supported activities were held together by legitimating dynamics inculcated at the university and the finishing school, then represented
by the students of the WDC graduates of the Alumnae Association in the wider academic and public fora of the conservatory and convocation halls. For one, Shakespeare, Sheridan and Molière were particularly well suited for the people and the purposes; but for another, they were the domain of the burgeoning institutions of the university and the finishing school, signs of higher learning and of positions that were increasingly accessible to women at the dual rank of actor-organizer. This programming exemplifies “history reproduced by education” (Bourdieu Distinction 4), at the same time that it also serves to educate, as grateful Varsity reviews of the time attest.

Moreover, these “classics,” and the ways in which the classics were produced and received, occupied markedly different, even conflicting, cultural spaces than those occupied by the popular fare produced by touring theatre professionals of the day. Productions like these offered by educational institutions shared some audiences with productions offered by the commercial theatres (notably students and some faculty and cultural elite), but they were hardly competitors with each other, as evident in the enthusiasm among undergraduates for annual University Theatre Nights at the Princess or the Royal Alexandra. These were different sorts of “legitimate theatre” productions that mutually defined each of their places in the field of exchanged symbolic goods where the amateurs produced “high art” and the professionals “lower art.” The practitioners of nonprofessional theatre produced in order to gain, and to avoid losing out on, social recognition by way of educational and institutional social capital. Their practice was, ostensibly, open to anyone with an interest and a relevant college or alumnae affiliation. In contrast, the professional gained or lost social capital among his or her fellow professionals as well as among nonspecialist audiences based on prestige under a waning syndicate “star” system. Practising and patronizing nonprofessionalized theatre was a sign of educated and socialized
taste that consecrated and legitimized the classics and supported local theatre production.

Decades before critics and practitioners aggressively pitted the Stratford Festival against the country’s “alternative theatres,” the early twentieth-century roots of Canadian theatre are found entangled among the already-legitimated canonical works of Shakespeare, Sheridan and Molière, as performed by the WDC, and the burgeoning amateur Little Theatre Movement at Hart House Theatre and, soon to be one of its most notable tenants, the Dramatic Club of the University College Alumnae Association.

**Alumnae on Campus: The First Two Decades (1919-WWII)**

When the U. C. Alumnae Association began turning its attention to theatre as a way to raise money from within and without the field of academe, Torontonians were finding entertainment at several film houses (the Imperial, Loew’s, Shea’s, Tivoli, the Uptown and the Hippodrome) and two professional theatres (the Royal Alexandra and the Princess of Wales). Of the latter, both were devoted to foreign touring shows from New York and London, and neither prioritized staging local talent or literary, educated tastes. In its early years, supporters began to view Alumnae’s theatre group as contributing to the city’s growing interest in Little Theatre practice, particularly as both the group and the practice became associated with Hart House Theatre, while Toronto’s interest in professional touring shows waned. As an Alumnae information page emphasized much later, and with some hyperbole, the group “was certainly the only place where you could actually do things—act, produce, design, set lights—in fact learn the endlessly fascinating craft of the theatre” (UADC Membership 1980). This participatory framework draws a line around, at least, U. C. women graduates who would not have had the
opportunity to practise theatre in another setting, and employs their situation as synecdoche of a potentially wider field. For these women, who were of some privilege and who held, at least, a university degree, the opportunity to do theatre while contributing to society in an approved manner held weight. But although there was no other alumnae group producing theatre at the university at the time, there were, increasingly, parallel theatre groups.

On campus after the war there was, in fact, an increasing variety of student dramatic opportunities hosted by colleges and departments each year, including clubs at Trinity, St. Michael’s, Victoria and University colleges. In particular, the latter’s new dramatic group, the Players’ Guild, maintained ongoing ties with Alumnae after forming. With heavy publicity in the Varsity and the Globe, and dozens signing on as members in the preceding months, the Players’ Guild opened as U. C.’s only non-departmental co-ed “dramatic society” in December 1922, following the recent collapse two years earlier of the WDC, from which it took over operating funds. Viewed at the outset as an undergraduate alternative to Hart House Theatre’s Players Club, it adopted a similar policy of not only producing plays, but also developing “student interest in the theatre and everything connected with it” (“Players’ Guild” Torontonensis 1925 320). The group, which continues to this day, began producing in January 1923 at the Women’s Union—“the alternate campus theatre [to Hart House Theatre]” (Averill Dramatis 9)—and gave early experience to future Alumnae-members including Francess Halpenny (“U. C. Players

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55 One prominent member of the Women’s Dramatic Club of Victoria College was Elizabeth Sterling (graduated 1920), who served as president of that group while participating in various performances and readings throughout the year (“Vic. Varsity) before acting at Hart House Theatre in its first season and then moving to Edmonton in 1922 contributing considerably to that province’s theatre.

56 Halpenny served on the Guild’s executive for three years. (“University College Players Guild” Torontonensis 1938, 254; 1939, 257; 1940, 269.)
Elsewhere on campus the U. C. Alumnae Association’s dramatic group took root. Through the 1920s and the 1930s the U. C. Alumnae Association offered an annual play at Hart House Theatre, while “evenings of short plays,” attended by invitation, appeared at the Women’s Union (Halpenny 1). When, after eight years of construction, on 11 November 1919 Hart House was finally converted from a military training facility to its original purpose of a male students’ gathering place, there was great cross-college anticipation for a post-war revival of campus dramatics—at least among men. Since Vincent Massey’s plans began a decade earlier, students and faculty expected Hart House to be “the most magnificently appointed clubhouse on the American continent” (“Finest” Globe). During the War, Col. Massey and the federal government allowed the nearly-complete building to serve as a military training facility for one year—complete with a “miniature Belgian village” through which men would hide, duck and practice exercises (“Hart House given” Varsity). Massey then placed it under control of the Military Hospitals Commission (“Blue” Globe; “Hart House now” Globe). When the War concluded, the university re-converted the firing range into a 470-seat theatre widely considered the best equipped on the continent: “There are but two theatres in America with a lighting equipment comparable to that which has been installed in this theatre” (“Hart House Theatre will” Varsity).

The Players Club of the University of Toronto, guided by Hart House Theatre’s newly appointed director Roy Mitchell, was to be the resident company producing its own season of plays while

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57 “Scattered through its half-unfinished rooms lie implements of war,” reported the Varsity, in January 1917, of Hart House’s recent use as “the first winter musketry school.” “While the tramp of steel-shod heels and the noise of hoarse commands vibrating through the long corridors, lend an air of stern, deadly earnestness so different from the concept of its founder.” Commented Col. Massey, “This training […] consists in passing messages along the trenches, describing targets, visual training and rifle practice” (“Hart House given” Varsity).
making the theatre and the building’s other halls available for lectures on drama and other subjects, and for use by a variety of campus groups (R. B. 80-81).

But the U. C. Women’s Undergraduate Association’s feisty publication, *The Rebel*, opined in March 1919 that in spite of the Women’s Union and Queen’s Hall, “when Hart House is open the material disparity may be on the side of the women.” The editorial went on, “Hart House will be open in the autumn to men of all faculties and every man in the University should find some use for the building. [Yet] the women live in a perpetual state of over-crowding and the contrast between Hart House and the Union is certainly that of palace and hovel” (“Hart” 193). Thus, the forthcoming use of Hart House by the U. C. Alumnae’s all-women’s club must have been accompanied by controversy, not entirely dissipated when Alumnae began allowing men to act with them as “guests” for the first time in their production of A. A. Milne’s *The Romantic Age* (Apr 1922). If Hart House was specifically constructed for the use of men, the Club had found a way to assert itself across some storied campus political boundaries.58

In the spring of 1920, having presented two annual productions, the U. C. Alumnae Association’s drama group officially gave itself the “thoroughly unwieldy […] descriptive” name “Dramatic Club of the University College Alumnae Association” (“History 1945, 5) and, a year later, presented at Hart House Theatre Sheridan’s *A Trip to Scarborough* (April 1921), again

58 A brief article in one of the dailies at the time signaled some of the gender politics at play:

Varsity women are really almost as interested in the splendid new “union” for the men students as the members of Hart House are themselves. And for the first few days of the term, little groups of femininity [sic] might often be seen exploring the long corridors and admiring this or that special feature of the place.

But now these are forbidden delights. A stern notice, to the effect that “women are admitted only at such (infrequent) times as may be specially announced,” is posted at the various entrances. Hart House is “out of bounds” for women.

Of course, there are women secretaries in different offices in the building, who come and go as they will, but apart from these, and the inevitable reporter, the male element has undisputed possession. (“Forbidden” *Telegram*?)
with an all-women cast. Without Kirkpatrick or Scott Raff, they directed the production themselves. Despite the prospect of moving away from the Conservatory Music Hall and into one of the continent’s most heralded theatre spaces, print discussion of the production was notably shallow. This is possibly due to a combination of two factors: first, if the club’s supposition was correct, Mitchell, who did not direct the play but who clearly exerted weighty influence over anything produced in his space, received criticism from the club for his influence on the play because he “believed in dark gloomy lighting—for a comedy” (Leonard); and second, the club had managed to attract more than their usual list of dignitaries and patronesses, including U. of T. president Falconer and his wife, as well as professors, judges, colonels and their wives, many named among nearly forty others by the *Globe* in lieu of significant discussion of the production (“Most enjoyable”). It is therefore plausible that in deference to the dignitaries at hand, scant mention of the production (and any faults) was made. Six months later the U. C. Alumnae Association was reported as “taking a deep interest in university theatrical matters and will take counsel with Mr. Bertram Forsyth, Hart House Theatre’s next Director, regarding them” (“School” *Globe*).

The following year the club’s women-only participatory policy was abandoned when it decided that producing plays without men, “though perhaps appropriate to the suffragette mood of the times, came to be frustrating as well as boring” (Halpenny 1). It is also very likely that including men in their productions was requisite for the use of Hart House Theatre. In return, the burgeoning new Little Theatre would help to attract the attention (and pocketbooks) of illustrious U. of T. alumni, many of whom had names that frequently graced the socialite columns of the city’s dailies. Thus men—or as one Alumnae document described them, “Male members of the amateur theatre hierarchy” (UADC “History” 1945, 1)—were “invited to perform as guests of
the Club” (Halpenny 1968, 1); a Mail announcement referred to them as “honourary members of the club” (“Romantic” Mail). Jim Craig, A. Monro Grier, Ivor Lewis and Henry Button joined members Boyle (Martin), Tytler, Cooper (Templeton), Squair and Muldrew (Stone) in the group’s first production of a contemporary play, Milne’s The Romantic Age, directed by Grier who, commented the Star’s reviewer, “is to be given much credit for his efforts” (“Romantic” Star). Still, as they are today, men were excluded from management responsibilities in the group, a situation which Halpenny has characterized as “attractive” to men because participation does not mean responsibility,” though it may mean hard work (Halpenny 1968, 1). As well, a “loyal corps of husbands and friends” contributed then, as now, with “carpentry and electricity and general advice” (UADC “Building” 1), or as painters or “accounting consultant[s]” (Halpenny 1968, 1).

In particular, by the mid-1940s, Muldrew (Stone)’s husband, Edgar Stone, was acknowledged by UADC as having made “the greatest contribution” to the group with his “unflagging interest, encouragement and direction stand[ing] as the greatest single asset on the Club’s ledger” (“History 1945, 2). By then he had directed seven UADC shows at Hart House Theatre and one Dominion Drama Festival (DDF) entry—Gregorio and Maria Martinez Sierra’s The Cradle Song—which, in 1937, won the DDF Festival Plaque for best presentation in English. A decade later UADC recorded that “In this production such a high standard was set for the Club that they have never since aspired to reach it” (UADC “History” 1945, 3).60

59 The Toronto Globe, Star and Telegraph printed reviews that were clearly copied from the same source, borrowing, on the same publication date, similar phrases in reviewing the piece. 60 As a guest actor, Andrew Allan contributed to UADC productions before embarking on his famed radio career at Toronto’s CFRB radio in 1933 and then CBC radio, as did W. E. S. Briggs, whose part in The Cradle Song led him to eventual prominence with CBC. Other male “guests” whom Alumnae foreground in their own documents include George Patton, Brendon Mulholland, Stewart Reburn (the figure skater), Percy Schutte, Norman Green, Frank Rostance,
By the time Alumnae presented two performances of Benavente’s *The Evil Doers of Good* (Feb 1925) at Hart House, the *Varsity* could look back at the group’s seven-year anniversary to conclude, “The Alumnae Dramatic Club have acquired a considerable reputation by their work in past years” (C. P. S. “Evil”) and that “[the play’s] presentation was a credit to the club whose high order of productions was vouched for by a house of unusual size” (“Evil” *Varsity*). The *Telegram* concurred, calling *Evil Doers* “another successful production to be credited” to the group,” though its praise was qualified by saying that the Players Club production of Benavente’s *The Bonds of Interest* at Hart House the previous year was given in “a more worthy and more convincing manner” (“Evil” *Telegram*).

Indeed, all of the city’s major newspapers gave consistent attention to every full production or one-act presented by the Club during its early years. This coverage focused variously on plot, acting and production quality and with relatively consistent mention—indeed, near-exhaustive listing—of the “dignitaries” in attendance at these one-, two- or three-performance productions which were, after all, university fundraisers, or at least associated with fundraising. Full-length offerings often attracted U. of T. president Falconer and his wife, with the likely purpose of extracting further funds from the notable doctors, judges and military officers in attendance. In particular, *Saturday Night*’s review of *The Evil Doers of Good* hinted that the play held immediate relevance: “The scene is laid in a small Spanish sea coast community, in which a group of wealthy old women with philanthropic purpose have banded themselves into the ‘Doers of Good’ and seek to run the lives of all poorer members of the

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Eric Aldwinkle (the war artist), Wallace House, Frank Hemingway, Rai Purdy, W. A. Atkinson (later of Ottawa Little Theatre), H. E. Hitchman, Murray Bonnycastle, Dudley Doughty, W. A. Atkinson, Percy Shutte, E. G. Sterndale Bennett and playwright W. S. Milne who was a University College contemporary of the club’s founding women. (Halpenny 1; UADC “History” 1945, 1-2)
community.[…] Do Canadians know this type of philanthropist? Echo answers ‘Yes’”

(“Another” *Saturday Night*).

Alumnae’s programming choices were fairly consistent in the years preceding the Second World War. Most productions were English drawing room comedies described by the group as “the Club’s darling” genre (UADC “History” 1945, 4). As one retrospective article in the *Toronto Star* noted, “One of the first and founding principles of the company was that it should produce not only the little known masterpieces of the theatre world but also the best contemporary plays from Broadway and London’s West End” (Jones *Toronto Star*). It “gradually” built a “loyal audience” (UADC “Building” 1), primarily from patrons associated with U. of T. These productions were later described by the company as “good theatrical fare, if not particularly experimental, with special care for costuming, and they provided satisfaction and therefore enjoyment for the company in playing them, an important feature when almost everyone was performing as an amateur with other career responsibilities” (Halpenny 1).

Just before the Second World War, Alumnae’s philanthropic policy changed permanently because “the needs of the club were such that the yearly revenue was used entirely for club activities” (UADC Newsletter, 1). In 1942 the group “became independent” of the University College Alumnae in order to expand its membership (UADC Newsletter, 1). To reflect this change, “University College” was dropped from the name and the group became known as the “University Alumnae Dramatic Club” or UADC (“University Alumnae” 1956, 1). This split from the Alumnae Association meant that while casting could now more easily expand beyond members of the U. C. Alumnae Association to alumnae of all U. of T. colleges, as well as that of
all Canadian and international universities, there was some loss of “financial and moral” support from U. C. (UADC “History” 1945, 5).61

The Second World War left UADC little time or personnel to produce plays, though their meetings went on “often to the sound of knitting needles” (Halpenny 1). Between September 1939 and August 1945 the group produced only three plays, all one-acts (Mar 1940), though some members—including Leonard and Alison Hewitt—were involved in non-club productions such as the *Climb Aboard the Merry-Go-Round Revue of 1943* at Eaton Auditorium (Feb 1943).62 By the end of the War, UADC had only eighteen active members, “of whom twelve belong[ed] to the twenty-years-or more class” (UADC “History” 1945, 6). The “unnaturalness” of these years meant that despite its official separation from University College, UADC made “no great strides […] in becoming representative of the whole University” (UADC “History” 1945, 5-6). The group sought to entice past members back from the Services and from “war jobs in other cities” as well as to “expand once more, gather in the needed quota of young people and start production again” (UADC “History” 1945, 6).

**Out of the Ivory Tower: UADC’s Move to a Wider Field (Post-WWII-1957)**

Immediately following the conclusion of the Second World War, UADC joined the short-lived Civic Theatre Association (CTA, 1945-49). As Anton Wagner relates, the CTA’s first

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61 Halpenny remarks that UADC requested and received the “official goodwill” of University of Toronto President Henry John Cody to expand its membership to include women from other recognized universities and colleges (Halpenny 1).
62 The flyer for the event read: “30 Beautiful Girls 30 Glittering, Glamorous, Gorgeous Girls in Stupendous, Scintillating, Sensational Show (Between engagements playing to the armed forces.) […] Entire Proceeds devoted to entertainment for the troops (Sponsored by the Citizens’ Committee for Troops in Training).”
general meeting, held 11 September 1945, attracted “over 200 persons from the Toronto theatre community at the Royal York Hotel” (Wagner 181). About fourteen theatre companies in the Toronto area, ten of them amateur, joined the CTA in order to find common ground, to gain marketing and monetary support from its leader—film and theatre critic Roly Young—and, rather boldly, to try “to discover whether more popular programming could significantly widen the limited audience base of amateur companies and thus rival commercial professional theatres, such as the Royal Alexandra” (Wagner 174). Young’s ultimate intention for the CTA was to keep Canadian practitioners in Canada (Toronto, really) by creating a professional theatre company in a multi-use performance complex that would allow them to make a career “in their native land” (Wagner 176). Young strongly favoured popular commercial fare and staunchly opposed, as he wrote in his Globe and Mail column, experimental modernism, exemplified by what he called “some cult which insists on Surrealist décor, atonal orchestra, and actors with sealing-wax eyelids and tin beards” (Young “Rambling”). Indeed, Wagner demonstrates that Young wanted his CTA to be antithetical to not only the commercial professional theatres of the day, but also to the nationalism of the Little Theatres’ new play production agendas, and to recent rumblings of a government-funded national theatre (Wagner 174).

The constitutive members of the CTA, ideologically driven by Young, intended to devise a restricted field of production for local, popular theatre programming offered by professional companies. Young hoped to compete with the professional touring companies as well as the

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63 As Anton Wagner notes, the inaugural issue of Roly Young’s Civic Theatre Magazine lists the following charter members: Belmont Players, Canada Players, Canadian Ballet, Canadian Mastersigners, Comedy Theatre Players, Community Players, Plaquest Drama Group, Toronto Children’s Theatre, Village Players, the Players Guild of Hamilton and the Woodstock Dramatic Society (Young 7). A subsequent Globe and Mail article adds to this list the Academy of Ballet, Toronto Caravan Players, University Alumnae Dramatic Club and the Playwrights Studio Group, but omits the Toronto Children’s Theatre and the Village Players (“Civic”) (Wagner fn17 188).
Little Theatres (and no doubt the educational institution to which Hart House in particular was attached) by building a public group identity—the “CTA”—and, progressively, an audience. In doing so the CTA was competing for the participant income of the former as well as the social status and the consecrating potential of the latter.\(^{64}\)

On the surface it may seem odd that a company connected to the influential Little Theatre at Hart House for the previous twenty-five years (not to mention one that would soon lead the way for modernist theatre production in Toronto) would align itself with an association aggressively dedicated to commercialized, professional theatre. In fact, Young may have been attempting to weaken Hart House Theatre by pulling UADC out of its Little Theatre clutches. Certainly, Dora Mavor Moore left the CTA after one year to found the modernist-focused New Play Society. But considering that Young followed Lawrence Mason and preceded Herbert Whittaker at the Globe and Mail, it is likely that UADC was in fact being savvy by aligning itself with the preferred tastes of an influential critic. It sought to expand its profile in order to expand its membership ranks, which had depleted significantly during the war years.

UADC’s prestige intensified as it achieved a number of post-war successes at the regional Central Ontario Drama League (CODL) Festival—in which it participated from the Festival’s first year in 1933—and in several instances the Dominion Drama Festival (DDF) Finals.\(^{65}\) The recognition UADC received at the CODL Festival and the DDF Finals provided “a

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\(^{64}\) This is one point at which Bourdieu’s Parisian framework needs to be modified for Canadian use because in this case the consecrating powers of post-secondary institutions are not felt as strongly in the popular areas of the field as they are in the experimental or classical areas.

\(^{65}\) UADC entered plays in the CODL competition, the DDF’s regional festival for the area, every year from the festival’s inception in 1933 (the third act of the Stuarts’ *Nine Till Six*; “University Alumnae” 1956, 1) through 1961 (Congreve’s *The Way of the World*; “A History” 1963, 2; “Play” 15), and then sporadically until 1967 (Davis’s *Daily News from the Whole World*; “Play” 20) (“Building” 1, “Play” *passim*). One 1956 UADC document characterized the DDF as “a great source of encouragement and stimulation for the group” (“University Alumnae” 1956, 1)
source of great encouragement to the Club where its high caliber presentations have been seen by large and responsive audiences” (UADC “History” 1963, 2) and “allowed the choice of more unusual and more stimulating plays for director, actors, costume designers, and stage crew” (Halpenny 1). The group began to attract emerging directors who in turn attracted “a new group of guest actors, among them younger men who were getting their training at Hart House theatre [and who would later] try to establish professional theatre in Canada” (Halpenny 1). But as Herbert Whittaker believed in reference to UADC, “Any theatre must always be judged by its list of plays, rather than its personalities” (H. Whittaker “Bluestockings”). Programming changes were imminent.

The moment at which UADC sought position-taking like-minded groups outside of the university marked a move away from the more or less predictable agents and internal relations at the university (itself a restricted field) to a wider field of production. UADC thus placed itself in a new economic field in which production costs had to be earned in ticket sales, as opposed to (partially) received from patronesses, and where income generated could be allocated toward its own productions. As UADC’s active membership expanded beyond U. of T., a new focus, new

A UADC “funding appeal” in 1961 characterized the strength of its CODL play choices being that they are “somewhat off the beaten track” (“Building” 1). The following productions won best play at the CODL: the Martinez Sierras’ Cradle Song (1937), Gordon’s Years Ago (1948), Shaw’s In Good King Charles’s Golden Days (1951), Eliot’s The Family Reunion (1953), Joudry’s Teach Me How to Cry (1956), Beckett’s Waiting for Godot (1958) and Reaney’s The Killdeer (1960) (“Building” 1). Cradle Song, Good King Charles, Teach Me and The Killdeer won best play at the DDF finals in their years. (Halpenny 1)

The company’s DDF victory for Teach Me How to Cry in 1956 prompted Toronto’s Mayor Nathan Phillips to present UADC “with an engraved silver tray in appreciation of its outstanding accomplishments. The production’s CODL awards were numerous: they included best production, the Lieutenant Governor’s award for the best Canadian play in the Festival, the Samuel French Challenge Trophy for the best presentation of a play by a Canadian author (Patricia Joudry), the Edgar Stone Challenge Trophy for direction (Leon Major) and the best actress award (Suzanne Finlay). The play then opened the 1956 summer season at Vineland, Ontario’s professional Garden Centre Theatre. (“University Alumnae” 1956, 2)
purpose and eventually new economic capital to rent and own property emerged. Still, its members took with them institutionalized cultural capital from their university education, which would lead to savvy programming decisions when opportunities for position-taking arose in the city. As the group left the ivory tower it could not help but, and indeed intended to, stay within the University’s shadow. Alumnae would soon lead Toronto in programming plays that would introduce audiences to emerging forms of European theatre as well as new local and Canadian work, while continuing to provide classical repertoire.

The “Coach House” Years (1957-71)

In the mid-1950s UADC, with a membership numbering fifty (“University Alumnae” 1956, 6), began to reconsider its programming and its raison d’être, and it did so more formally and precisely than it had a decade earlier. Since the mid-1920s it had produced an average of just over two plays a year at various locations, including the U. of T. Women’s Union, the Arts and Letters Club, Forest Hill Collegiate and, most often, Hart House Theatre. Plays by Wilder, Shaw, Eliot, Fry, Chekhov and Wilde held “intellectual” value and were often tremendously well received. Along with Edgar Stone, guest directors included notables such as Robert Gill, twice E.G. Interndale Bennett, twice William Needles, three times Henry Kaplan and, frequently, Herbert Whittaker. Furthermore, Leon Major’s world premiere direction of Patricia Joudry’s Teach Me How to Cry gained UADC the DDF’s coveted first place Calvert Trophy in the spring of 1956, and a subsequent production at the Vineland Ontario Summer Festival’s Garden Centre Theatre. This success, combined with a growing desire to find a venue of its own, as well as the arrival of Herbert Whittaker to Toronto as theatre critic for the Globe and Mail, led to significant
focusing of UADC’s programming, as well as the “intellectual theatre”⁶⁶ that would come to reflect the “Coach House Program.”

With the recent growth of local professionalization represented by companies such as the New Play Society (1946-71), the Crest Theatre (1953-66), and a fresh increase in touring companies to Toronto (Halpenny 2), UADC began to compare its repertoire to other Toronto fare. Its “typical format” of a handful of large shows each year was no longer the best choice because it was now losing important “theatre night sponsor” attention to the “professional competence” of new groups (Halpenny 2). It also compared its work more carefully to other nonprofessionalized companies in Toronto, particularly Hart House Theatre. It moved away from playing the commercial fare advocated by Young’s CTA and instead sought to produce, and in many cases premiere, intellectual, modern and, frequently, theatre of the absurd plays, many of which it entered in the CODL Festival. It argued that its “strength lies mainly in [its] ability to cope with the more thought-provoking side of drama—the side least probed by the majority of non-professional groups who tend, for the most part, to stress the latest Broadway or West End offerings” (“University Alumnae” 2). It later described its “special contributions” to the city’s repertoire as founded upon “intelligent reading and a dedication to presenting the author’s words directly and simply to the kind of audience that would be particularly interested” (Halpenny 2). It was this sensibility, and the potential it held for Toronto theatre at the time, that must have attracted Herbert Whittaker to the group.

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⁶⁶ By “intellectual theatre,” I mean plays chosen for production with the overt intention of edification in an extra-scholastic environment. It should be remembered that during the “Coach House” years, Alumnae’s membership, by definition, comprised of post-secondary-educated women who often actively sought to produce plays they had encountered as undergraduates. If a play was to be found on a university syllabus as representative of its time period, or if it was finding critical acclaim for its social insight into contemporary circumstances, it might be found at UADC at this time.
Critic Urjo Kareda wrote that Herbert Whittaker was “perhaps the single most important male influence upon the Alumnae during their development” (Kareda “Our most”). When Whittaker arrived in Toronto from the Montreal Gazette to replace Young at the Globe and Mail it took him less than two seasons to begin a thirty-five year working relationship with Alumnae as an award-winning director, designer and advisor, outside his day job as theatre critic. As scholars Jennifer Harvie and Ric Knowles describe him, he was a “Canadian theatre institution” (Harvie and Knowles 215). From 1951 to 1983, he directed eighteen plays for Alumnae, including Shaw’s In Good King Charles’ Golden Days (Feb 1951), his first with the company for which he won the CODL Best Play trophy and the DDF Best Visual Presentation award; the world premiere of Williams’s To Ride a Tiger (Nov 1956); and the Toronto premiere of Ryga’s The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (which he also designed).67

Credited by the company as having set new sights for them (Halpenny “University” 573) and having “challenged their best efforts” (Halpenny 1), Whittaker’s influence on the group’s programming is impossible to ignore. Halpenny says his influence included “[choosing] new plays for the UADC Festival entries and attract[ing] actors who were then trying to make their way professionally” (Halpenny “University” 573). Following Whittaker’s lead, UADC began to introduce a number of European plays to Toronto audiences for the first time. With increasing

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67 Herbert Whittaker directed thirteen productions for UADC/Alumnae: Shaw’s In Good King Charles’ Golden Days (Feb 1951, CODL, DDF), Molnar’s Olympia (Oct 1951, Apr 1952, CODL), Eliot’s The Family Reunion (Feb 1953, CODL, DDF), Chekov’s Uncle Vanya (Mar 1955, CODL, DDF), William’s To Ride a Tiger (Nov 1956, CODL), Beckett’s Endgame (Dec 1959), Two One-Acts: Simpson’s The Hole and Pinter’s The Room (Mar 1963), Pinter’s The Caretaker (Feb-Mar 1964), O’Neill’s A Touch of the Poet (Mar-Apr 1965), Three One-Act Plays from Ottawa: Shirley’s Pi, Blackburn’s The Day of the Lemmings and MacCallum’s The Rest Room (May 1965), Cunningham’s Aperitif (Feb-Mar 1968), Pinter’s The Birthday Party (Jan-Feb 1969), Ryga’s The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (Nov 1969), Pinter’s Old Times (Mar-Apr 1975), Wilder’s The Alcestiad or A Life in the Sun (Nov-Dec 1978), Eliot’s The Cocktail Party (Mar-Apr 1982) and Chekov’s The Cherry Orchard (Nov-Dec 1983).
regularity, it staged modern and theatre of the absurd plays by Anouilh, Beckett, Pinter, Ionesco, Lorca, Genet, Frisch and Albee. Many of these were Toronto and Canadian premieres. In the late-1950s it began to take the lead in Toronto by producing world premieres by Canadian writers. Wrote Whittaker in his weekly column, “Of late [UADC] has recognized the nation’s need and sought new writers. [These plays] were not all immediately popular but they were all immediately important” (H. Whittaker “Bluestockings”).

Concurrently, UADC looked to have more control over the space in which its productions were staged. For nearly forty years, most of its productions had appeared at Hart House Theatre, as well as at churches, temples, high schools and community centres. But the $1,000 first place prize money they won at the 1956 DDF Finals for Joudry’s *Teach Me How to Cry* was the “nest egg” (UADC “History” 1963, 2) that “provided the security” (Halpenny 2) the company needed to rent, for the first time, a home of its own. Moreover, Hart House Theatre was dealing with “mounting money worries” (Thomas 1962) and a post-war commitment to its off-campus drama grew less and less feasible (H. Whittaker “Toronto’s”).

Thus, in March 1957 UADC, for the first time, found its own space. It moved into a coach house at 16 Huntley Street, southeast of Bloor and Jarvis Streets, which it converted into an intimate thirty-five-seat theatre with a seven-by-fourteen-foot stage (UADC “History” 1963, 2; Halpenny 2). This terribly small space, which it described at the time as “the first intimate theatre in Toronto” (UADC “History” 1963, 2), defined the group’s programming choices in much the same way that a small space had defined the naturalist experiments of Antoine’s Theatre Libre in Paris seventy years earlier. Here, UADC fashioned itself as “one of the pioneers in the development of off-Bloor theatre” (“UADC 1968, 3) and “the first ‘off-Broadway’ theatre

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68 Halpenny notes that the Huntley Street Coach House was located behind the U. of T.-affiliated Woodsworth House. Both were later demolished for a high-rise apartment. (Halpenny 2)
in Toronto” (UADC “History” 1963, 2; UADC “Building” 2; Halpenny 2), an obvious comparison to the burgeoning success of New York’s alternative theatre scene and a nod to the Huntley Street Theatre’s three-block proximity to the city’s Bloor and Yonge Street commercial theatre district.

UADC thus embarked on what would be fourteen years of “Coach House Theatre” programming at the first of four rented spaces. Its “intention” under its Coach House Programme “was to present in an intimate theatre plays which would probably not be done in commercial theatre” (“UADC” 1960, 4-5). This was accomplished through four or five presentations a season, plays that an audience interested in exploring theatre would not be likely to see anywhere else in Toronto, productions deliberately kept simple and mounted on a tiny budget, attendance secured largely by means of a gradually increasing mailing list. (Halpenny 2)

The close quarters of the playing space and the limited seating meant that plays requiring small casts and simple sets were chosen out of necessity; plays of the modern theatre, for example, fit the bill. As UADC stated a few years later,

In 1957 the members decided they wished to be able to produce unusual plays of the past and present in a modest setting which would not demand the financial investment of even three nights in a large theatre, but which would on the other hand provide the experience of playing for a longer run. (UADC “Building” 2)

These runs normally lasted ten days or twelve performances, a duration that allowed UADC’s actors more time than before (one to four days at Hart House, for example) to improve their skills in front of an audience.

It worked. Beginning with Ibsen’s eight-hander John Gabriel Borkman (March 1957), “steady” audiences from U. of T., recent immigrants to the city accustomed to “such ‘special’ theatre,” or groups who preferred “the new and the unusual” “gradually accepted” the company’s reinvention and enjoyed “the intimacy of their relationship with the actors” (UADC “Building”
2). Guest male actors became increasingly attracted to the professional advancement opportunities UADC offered when “they [did] not have a chance to play elsewhere” (UADC “Building” 2). The combination of focused programming and a new space to properly accommodate its production choices resulted in several critical and financial successes. Proclaimed the company, “soon a public began seeking out” UADC’s plays (UADC “Building” 2).

However, within eight months a move to a new location became necessary when the Huntley Street landlord wanted to use the building for other ventures and, as the company described, noises from the apartment above the theatre frequently disturbed performances (UADC 1968, 4). Thus, the Huntley Street Coach House yielded just two further productions: the Canadian premieres of Anouilh’s *Ardèle* (June 1957) and Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (November 1957), the latter of which achieved near-mythic success at the CODL Festival and then at the DDF Finals in the spring of 1958.

The following season, UADC rented loft space above a garage at 200 Bedford Road in the northeast part of the Annex. With more room at the Bedford location, the new “Coach House Theatre” (the moniker was kept to maintain public familiarity with both company and programming) accommodated fifty-five seats. Here, UADC opened with Sardou’s “well-made” style play *A Scrap of Paper* (June 1958). In the fall of 1958, UADC staged six productions in

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69 UADC also staged the world premiere of Newton’s *The Lion and the Unicorn* sometime between November 1957 and March 1958, but the location is not clear in Alumnae’s records.

70 One UADC document claims that at this first Coach House Theatre, “Originally, the productions were intended for the amusement of Club members only, but eventually others were admitted by invitation. The first real outside success was Anouilh’s *Ardèle*, which had to be held over” (UADC 1960, 3). The document goes on to say that the play proved the space would be inadequate because with no backstage crossover the actors had to exit and reenter the building. Thus, “the inhabitants of Huntley Street were treated to the strange spectacle of figures flitting in and out of Number 16, clad only in Victorian nightgowns” (4).
what was essentially its first full “season” in its forty-year history. Added to five modernist plays—Pirandello’s *As You Desire Me* (Nov 1958), Lorca’s *Yerma* (Toronto premiere, Dec 1958), Ionesco’s *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson* (the latter, if not also the former, a Toronto premiere, April-May 1959) and Merrill’s *The Immortal Husband* (June 1959)—were two rare period pieces: Farquhar’s *The Beaux-Stratagem* (Oct 1958) and Jonson’s *The Alchemist* (Mar 1959). Three more productions appeared at the Bedford location the following season: Turgenev’s *A Month in the Country* (Oct-Nov 1959), the Toronto premiere of Beckett’s *Endgame* (Dec 1959), the world premiere of Reaney’s first acclaimed play, *The Killdeer* (Jan 1960)—a production that won the 1960 DDF awards for the playwright, director (Pamela Beckwith, *née* Terry), designer and supporting actress (Virginia McLeod)—and Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (March 1960). The latter was held over twice, played a total of seventeen nights and turned people away at the door (“UADC” 1960, 5). This success prompted UADC to enter it in the CODL festival the following year. By this time, UADC boasted a membership numbering between sixty and seventy (Wentes), and a mailing list of over a thousand (“Alumnae Drama”).

However, housing a theatre company at the Bedford location was again proving undesirable for their landlord (“Halpenny” 2) and UADC was forced to move. This time the group resolved to buy their own property, which would be no small accomplishment considering that no local theatre company had ever owned its own building in Toronto. By March 1960, UADC purchased a property at 62 Birch Avenue with the intentions of building a theatre of its own, presenting four or five productions a year and renting out space for the remaining time to “small concerts or other theatrical productions” (UADC “Building” 2). In a funding appeal to potential donors, UADC wrote,
It is the hope of the company to have a new home which will be permanent, in which they can present the same theatrical fare as they have been offering in recent years. The building will be simple but functional\(^1\) for the purposes of the productions. It is hoped that a ticket will cost no more than $1.50. It is worthy of note that in its forty years of operation the Club accounts have always been “in the black,” even if only by a modest amount. (UADC “Building” 2)

A committed core of members had run UADC responsibly during its first forty years and they intended to continue to do so with the enhanced recognition of owning their own space. UADC had remained “in the black, even though it had avoided fixing ticket prices—box office income at its Coach House Theatres had been “pay what you can.” It later attributed this sound management to “rigorous control of ambitions and steady recognition of sensible aims” (Halpenny 2).

But having purchased the Birch Avenue property with donated funds, UADC’s attempts to raise $30,000-$40,000 to build the actual theatre by selling season subscriptions fell short of the mark.\(^2\) The Birch Avenue plan was scrapped. Later, Nathan Cohen noted in his theatre column the particular difficulty the group’s members had in procuring the funds: “Raising $30,000 may not sound like a very large objective, but it is a vast sum when the people raising it [primarily women] are unable to go to corporations, foundations, investors, and the other familiar sources of financial aid” (Cohen “At Last”).\(^3\) UADC was left to raise the funds by selling season subscriptions.

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\(^1\) The reference to “simple but functional” was likely a contemporary contrast to the October 1960 opening of the O’Keefe Centre. Herbert Whittaker vilified the O’Keefe Centre with statements such as: “the [Alumnae] ladies are determined that [their new theatre] will be self-supporting. Can the 3,200-seat O’Keefe centre say the same?” and “[Alumnae’s new theatre will be] as important in its own modest way as the spacious one that opened last October” (H. Whittaker “Bluestockings”).

\(^2\) The idea of selling season theatre subscriptions, now ubiquitous, arrived to professional theatre in Canada a few years late, in 1965, when the Chicago Lyric Opera’s marketing consultant Danny Newman, “the apostle of subscription,” expounded its virtues to the Canada Council (see Czarnecki 39).

\(^3\) UADC in fact purchased 62 Birch Avenue, southwest of St. Clair Avenue and Yonge Street, to convert it into a theatre (“University Alumnae” 1960, 5; UADC “Building” 1961, 2), but the
subscriptions ("Alumnae Group"), a tall order for any theatre company at that time. Without its own venue, UADC mounted only two productions between April 1960 and March 1961, both in the same month: Betti’s *The Queen and the Rebels* at the Central Library Theatre (Mar 1961) and a remount of their previous year’s success, Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (Mar 1961), for the CODL Festival at Hart House Theatre.

The following season (1961-62), UADC was able to mount a full roster of productions, but they were scattered across several venues and they were not the plays it had originally planned. An ambitious season plan had UADC intending to revive Congreve’s *The Way of the World* at Hart House Theatre for three nights in October, followed by three weighty offerings at the Central Library Theatre: Synge’s *The Well of the Saints* in November, Udall’s *Ralph Roister Doister* in February and (again) Betti’s *The Queen and the Rebels* in March. Instead of these productions, however, just over forty years after it produced Molière’s *Les Femmes Savantes*, the group produced the play again, for one performance, at the Art Gallery of Ontario’s Sculpture Court (Dec 1961). The season’s other plays—twelve modern one-acts and “sketches” offered in a “series” of three fall productions and one spring production (May 1962)—featured what were likely Toronto premieres of works by Pinter, Simpson, Mortimer, Beckett, Genêt, Bryn, de Ghelerode and Lippman. It is likely this change in programming, from three major productions to several briefer plays (each directed by different people), afforded slimmed-down productions which allowed UADC members to concentrate more fully on gaining a permanent home for the company.

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Building Fund Committee was unable to raise enough funds for the conversion, “even with donations from friends and corporations” (UADC “History” 1963, 2). The committee consisted of Miss Vida Peene (chair), Mrs. D. W. McGibbon, the Hon. Mr. Justice Carl D. Stewart, Edgar Stone, Mrs. James Milner, Mrs. W. Hewitt Bayley, Arthur Gelber and UADC members Agatha Leonard and Frances Halpenny (“Alumnae Drama”). UADC later acknowledged that the synagogue location they ultimately purchased offered, “far more space and scope than the plans for the narrow Birch Street [sic] lot would have allowed” (UADC “History” 1963, 3).
It had been more than two years since UADC produced a play at a theatre of its own. By July 1962, now approaching ninety members (UADC “History” 1963, 1) and having “built up a small but devoted audience” (Thomas 1962), it raised enough money for what it called “Operation Conversion.” The new objective was to purchase a 1920-built Orthodox synagogue at the corner of Huron and Cecil Streets, just south of the Central Library Theatre and the University of Toronto’s downtown campus, with a $32,000 down payment raised from members (UADC “History” 1963, 3), and to renovate it from fundraising monies into a ninety-four-seat thrust theatre. Architect Herbert Agnew, a “tireless artistic consultant and professional advisor,” donated his design for the theatre and guided the project, while longtime UADC guest actor and designer Russ Waller designed the “Stratford-style” thrust stage (UADC “About”). The long oak benches used for seats came from this and another nearby synagogue (UADC “About”) and were cushioned (Cohen “At Last”) for some added comfort. Buying its own building finally made UADC “the first theatrical company, amateur or professional, to own its own theatre in Toronto” (UADC “History” 1963, 3). No other theatre company in the city would own its own building until Theatre Passe Muraille famously purchased its Ryerson Street location in 1975 (TPM sold it back to the city in 2007).

The purchase of the synagogue provided UADC with an incentive to re-brand itself by combining its new asset with its already strong familiarity of Toronto’s theatre scene. Stated one company document, “members have one aim—to make a permanent home for Canadian and experimental theatre in Canada comparable to the Royal Court in London and the off-Broadway theatres in New York” (UADC “History” 1963, 4). In his theatre column, Cohen

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74 To this document “and classical” is inserted in pencil here.
contextualized the importance of “the semi-professional but altogether excellent” UADC (Cohen “How”) to Toronto (and Canada):

Little by little, and in sudden spurts, the number of legitimate theatres in Toronto is increasing. We have acquired two new playhouses in the tail’s end of the year. Sometime next season, a third will open its doors.

The Coach House gives us something we have never had: a permanent experimental workshop where what is very modern in drama, and very old, and what is new, can be presented regularly and without any of the risks that make commercial theatre so timid an institution. The record of the University Alumnae is proof positive that the Coach House will be an important force in Toronto’s theatre life. (Cohen “Question”)

The press of the day referred to UADC as “the best amateur theatre company in English-speaking Canada” with “an unrivaled record in the promotion of Canadian and experimental plays” (“Home”). Going further—and with the aid of an accompanying caricature map of UADC’s new neighbourhood—Whittaker defined the new Coach House Theatre (the moniker still remained) as one among several “off-College St.” theatres that included the Red Barn’s Central Library location, Theatre in the Dell, the Village Playhouse, the Bohemian Embassy, the Grenville Street Theatre and of course “the most historical” of the bunch, Hart House Theatre (H. Whittaker “Toronto’s”). As responses to Toronto’s commercial theatres, the “off-College St.” theatres were “brave ventures” with “one thing in common: the certain uncertainty of their future.” Collectively, they had the potential to offer “healthy and determined indigenous theatre” to Canada (H. Whittaker “Toronto’s”).

Its programming was on the mark. In 1962-63, its first season at the Cecil and Huron Coach House, UADC continued to focus on modern plays, what the contemporary press frequently termed “experimental plays” (“Women” 1962). It inaugurated its new space by picking up where it had left off, with a new play “especially written for the Club” (UADC “History” 1963 3) by Reaney titled The Easter Egg (Nov 1962). It was reported as “the seventh
Canadian play they’ve done in four years” (Thomas 1962). The first three nights were reserved for “patrons” only, likely those who had contributed to the funding and building of the new theatre. The gesture was reminiscent of the club’s early days of playing to publicly acknowledged patronesses when it was still part of the university. It then produced another new Canadian play, this time by Edmonton writer, professor and McLuhan collaborator Wilfred Watson, titled *The Trial of Corporal Adam* (Apr-May 1963). Modern works by Simpson, Pinter and Richardson also appeared that season, while the next season opened with Shaw’s *Major Barbara* (Oct 1963), followed by works by Frisch and Pinter and the English premiere of French-Canadian Jacques Languirand’s *The Gibbet* (May 1964). The next six seasons more or less continued the “Coach House Program” of two or three modernist works (including local or national premieres), a larger period piece and a new Canadian play.

UADC remained at the former synagogue until the spring of 1969 when Ontario Hydro “expropriated” the property “for expansion purposes” (UADC 1972). Thus, the 1969-70 season offered four productions at four different venues: the Toronto premiere of Ryga’s *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (Nov 1969) marked a return to the nearby Central Library Theatre; a reading of a new play by actor Michael B. Polley titled *The Song Is Far Away* (Nov 1969) at 10 Maplewood Avenue near Bathurst and St. Clair in the Oakwood Vaughn neighbourhood; five short plays presented as “Collision Course” (Feb 1970) and van Itallie’s *America Hurrah* at the Central Library Theatre (Mar 1970). But for the next season the still-homeless company offered only one production, a one-act double-bill of Anne Tait’s *D.H. Lawrence: Man and Demon* (directed by Tait) and D.H. Lawrence’s *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd*, both at the Central Library Theatre (Feb-Mar 1971).

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75 Alumnae’s documents do not mention the location of “Collision Course.”
The 1971-72 season found UADC playing from their fourth, and last, “Coach House Theatre” at the small church hall on Maplewood Avenue, where Polley’s play had been read. Fittingly, the season returned to the “Coach House Program” pattern again: a double bill of Strindberg’s *Creditors* with a third Reaney premiere, *One Man Masque* (Nov 1971); a new adaptation and translation of Naruda’s *Lives of the Poet* (Oct-Nov 1971); excerpts from works by several modern authors (Jan-Feb 1972); and Pinter’s *Landscape and Silence* (March 1972), directed by new *Toronto Star* theatre critic Urjo Kareda. Here, UADC fashioned itself as developing “a genre that would become important—readings or semi-dramatized scripts created by members” and adaptations of works by authors like Emily Carr, Susanna Moodie, Catherine Parr Traill and Alice Munro (Alumnae 2001, 3).

Striking about these Coach House years was not only the company’s focus on a needed genre, but also Herbert Whittaker’s influence on the club in defining this aesthetic space to the company and to the public. “Off-Broadway,” “Off-Bloor,” “Off-College”—Whittaker was a critic in search of a theatre community, both territorial and relational, on which to report and, to a lesser extent, a director and designer in search of a restricted field of production in which to practice. As a critic with a definable theatre community he would be able to describe to his readership the importance of a geographically definable, and defining, set of Toronto’s theatre groups by means of an exciting and dynamic, if borrowed and foreign, analogy. As a nonprofessionalized artist he could lend his name and his experience to an influential and trend-setting theatre company. UADC must have seemed to him to be a company with a track record that might make a founding and influential cornerstone for a theatre community, with him in the dual position to define it as both critic and practitioner; something of a local George Bernard Shaw.
And while Whittaker was a critic in search of a community, UADC was a company in search of a space. An intellectual nomad since its departure from U. of T., the location of UADC’s productions changed repeatedly. However, its ties to the city’s theatre practitioners, both amateur and professional, were constitutive of Toronto theatre. Its members often moved on to professional theatres, and though it was becoming a politically charged action, some moved between professionalizing and nonprofessionalizing companies whenever they could. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Toronto theatre community did not, could not, draw hard lines between its professional and amateur practices because a large portion of its constitutive agents sought meaningful theatre experiences wherever they could find them. But this does not mean that influential professional practitioners in Toronto did not sometimes try to articulate a hard and fast difference between professional and amateur work then. In her book on Dora Mavor Moore, Paula Sperdakos writes that sometime after leaving the CTA Moore’s New Play Society and UADC fell into conflict when they both programmed Fry’s *Venus Observed* in the same week. She cites Moore as saying that, in Sperdakos’s words, “the Alumnae production was so bad that word of mouth kept theatre-goers away from her show,” though Sperdakos goes on to suggest that “it is possible that Toronto audiences had simply had enough of Fry” due to two other of his plays being presented in Toronto during the past two seasons (Sperdakos 213). Moore’s utterance of difference was, of course, a strategy of position-taking intended to put the company she founded and ran above UADC (whether the comment was made in her own diary or publicly), as much as it was a comment on quality.

UADC’s “Coach House Years” represented an important decade-and-a-half for Toronto theatre. From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, Toronto theatre practitioners lay the groundwork for the field of production within which a profession could be built. Indeed, much of the
profession’s development would be tested from the heart of Canada’s most populated city. Yet as a professional era began to take shape, UADC’s Coach House programming emphasized the type of programming that the professional companies of the day could not present. Its “Intellectual theatre” served educated, modern audiences interested in both artistic developments outside of their borders and new plays locally written. Forced location changes in part necessitated the sort of pared-down “intimate” programming that Herbert Whittaker likened to “off-Broadway,” reminding us that aesthetic creation cannot be divorced from economic necessity, even in nonprofessionalized contexts. In these terms, UADC balanced the continuity necessary to maintain a public “brand” of theatre while using the increased economic capital it had saved since after the wars to deal with its changing circumstances. This was a sort of position taking that succeeded more often than it failed, in part because UADC had a public voice in Whittaker, and later Kareda, that helped constitute, test and translate its intentions to a curious audiences which it, in fact, helped to shape for the benefit of future “alternative” theatre companies. In this sense, UADC went a great distance in shaping the tastes of Toronto audiences for the “relevant,” the “thought-provoking” and the “new.”

Alumnae at the Firehall (1972-Present)

In the summer of 1971, UADC set about renovating, at last, its own long-term space. Firehall No. 4, the “Berkeley Street Firehall” (70 Berkeley Street at Adelaide Street) had been built in the first decade of the twentieth century to replace the previous Firehall No. 4 built on that location in 1859 (the extant hose tower-cum-stairwell dates back to an 1871 remodeling). Then-UADC president Norma Clark and building committee chairman Molly Thom had learned
in February 1970 that that June the fire department would move to a new firehall a block southwest on Princess Street. They set out to petition the city for the historic building. What followed were eighteen months of difficult negotiations which led to “a remarkable partnership between The City and [UADC,] ensuring the restoration and renovation” of the firehall (UADC 1972, 1).

UADC’s efforts were successful in large part because of support from the surrounding community. The Department of Parks and Recreation took control of the property in March 1970 with the initial intention of tearing down the firehall and creating a “sitting-out park” or “parkette.” But with the area slowly gentrifying with new townhouses and boutiques, residents supported UADC’s idea of preserving the unique building with a theatre that could “provide a focal point in their attempt to bring life back into this corner of the city” (UADC 1972, 2). From March to June, Clark, Thom and UADC’s “legal mentor” Arthur Davies petitioned the Parks Department to save the firehall by offering to invest $80,000 to $90,000 of UADC’s money (acquired primarily from the province for the recent expropriation of its synagogue location) toward renovation and restoration (UADC 1972, 3). In June the Parks Committee unanimously recommended to the Executive Committee that, “the use of this building by the University Alumnae Dramatic Club constitutes the best possible recreational use for the property” (UADC 1972, 3). The argument to preserve the firehall was opportune as it fit well into contemporary dialogue about revitalizing Toronto’s urban landscape by favouring “the preservation of old buildings in declining neighbourhoods as one of the prime means of preventing further decay” (W. K. 1970). Following a summer of public discussion that amounted to a theatres versus parks controversy, largely stirred up by editorialists (for example, Wales 1970), on October 1 the Committee approved the Parks Department’s UADC recommendation (“Theatre in a firehall”
A year later, in July 1971, the city enacted a by-law that gave UADC “control of the firehall through a Board of Management appointed by City Council” (UADC 1972, 4). As Kareda reported in his theatre column shortly before directing UADC’s final show on Maplewood Avenue, “They edged their project past several occasions of imminent collapse, surrounded by flurries of committees, phone calls, letters, personal deputations and pleadings” (Kareda “An ideal”). And though the city would not sell the building to UADC outright, Thom later explained that, “In exchange for one dollar, we became the custodians for fifty years, with our investment in renovations and restoration protected should the city decide to terminate the agreement” (qtd in Pritchard 19). This “custodianship” allowed Alumnae “To escape responsibility under a lease for the $6,400 in taxes” (Goldberg “Saving”). As page four of UADC’s press announcement mystically proclaimed, “The omens are right—the firehall No. 4 becomes the University Alumnae Dramatic Club’s fourth home and Toronto’s fourth downtown theatre. A beginning has been made” (UADC 1971, 4).\footnote{By “fourth downtown theatre,” UADC includes Theatre Passe Muraille, Factory Lab Theatre and Tarragon Theatre. Toronto Free Theatre opened down the street a few months later.}

Ronald J. Thom—Molly Thom’s husband and architect of the Shaw Festival Theatre, as well as of Massey College and Trent University—designed and oversaw the firehall’s extensive renovations (UADC Membership 1980; “Firehall”; Goldberg “Saving”; Kareda “An Ideal”). Its apparatus room (which housed the fire engines) and former-stables were converted into a well-equipped mainstage theatre seating 154; the second floor directly above was removed. The third floor loft-style Edwardian billiard room was made into an intimate studio theatre, the locker-room made into a bar, and “ample storage areas, workshops, wardrobe, backstage and lobby space” were fashioned (UADC Membership 1980; Jones). The exterior remained “virtually unchanged” (Jones). Along with what amounted to $100,000 of UADC’s accumulated assets was
added a Local Initiatives Project (LIP) grant of $25,000 to pay for nine months of renovations (Goldenberg “Saving”). Club members volunteered their time toward interior “decorating tasks” and installing the seats (Goldenberg “Saving”). Remarkably, during these two years of securing and renovating the firehall, UADC maintained productions at the Central Library and Maplewood Avenue locations.

UADC opened as “The Firehall Theatre” in October 1972 with O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars* to widespread publicity and a healthy dose of historical bravado. The historic yet intensely relevant, and even experimental, company was now sheltered in an historic and recently updated landmark. The press was pleased to remind Torontonians of what it knew about UADC’s robust history at the same time that it compared it to the city’s emerging “alternate theatres.” Wrote Kareda, “Unquestionably, the most important dramatic event in Toronto next week is the opening of the Firehall Theatre.” He continued:

[T]his is the group, more than any other, which has reworked Toronto’s theatrical atmosphere. […] Their achievements are legion. […] Over the half-century-and-a-bit of their existence, they have taken the first steps in so many directions. […] The Alumnae is a stunning, startling example of a mass collective, unified will, modified by ambition, intelligence and the utter inability to understand rejections. (Kareda “Our most”)

“Their past achievements are legendary,” announced Rick Ley. “Their intelligent, straight-forward approach to building programmes has influenced many of Toronto’s smaller avant-garde theatres. It can be said that as a creative productive force in the theatrical community, the Alumnae Club has no equal” (Ley 1972). Citing UADC’s track record of presenting Toronto with Jacobean and Restoration drama, premiering the works of Canadian authors and presenting plays from the modern theatre when no one else would, Ley went on to indicate the company’s place in Toronto’s rapidly shifting theatre milieu:
In spite of all the enthusiasm and excitement [...] Alumnae must still have some doubt as to their chances of prospering as a small alternative theatre. As with most of the other small theatres, the financial burden is great. Also there is the fact that they must compete with the others in a time when theatrical activity has expanded radically in Toronto. (Ley 1972)

Though it remained devoutly nonprofessionalized, UADC was now effortlessly being compared to Toronto’s newly formed professional “alternate theatres,” much as Herbert Whittaker had compared it to its former off-Broadway-style neighbours a decade earlier. It was “Toronto’s original alternate theatre,” declared Gillian Pritchard in Scene Changes” (Pritchard 10), and “Toronto’s most creative theatre group” (Kareda “Toronto’s) in the year that all four professional “alternative” companies were at their best. Theatre Passe Muraille (1968- ), Factory Theatre Lab (1970- ), Tarragon Theatre (1971- ) and—having opened just four months earlier and two blocks south on Berkeley Street—Toronto Free Theatre (1972-88) were all gaining critical attention with their revolutionary programming and rhetoric. Though UADC was not dedicated primarily

77 Urjo Kareda, the influential theatre critic for the Toronto Star during the 1970s, famously used the term “alternative theatre” in a manifesto-like article printed 16 September 1972. He used it to refer to theatre that “rushes where the commercial theatre fears to tread” (“Alternative”), specifically theatre produced at TPM, Factory, Tarragon and Toronto Free. Arguably, Kareda’s public and favourable positioning of these four companies throughout his time at the Star confirmed their national influence and local durability (Toronto Free merged with the regional CentreStage in 1986 to form the Canadian Stage Company).

The article was prompted by a remarkable series of theatre-related events in Toronto between May and November of 1972: French’s Leaving Home opened at Tarragon in May with a remount in September, Toronto Free (with its mandate of free tickets) opened in June, TPM’s The Farm Show opened in Clinton, Ontario in August with a remount in Toronto in September, and Tarragon programmed its first Tremblay translation, Forever Yours, Marie-Lou in November. (Kareda comparably celebrated the Alumnae firehall opening in November.) In the article Kareda noted the importance of play development, audience development and Federal Local Initiative Project (LIP) grants to the alternative theatres. Self-referentially, but with specific reference to Toronto Free, he concluded by saying, “Perhaps the future and essence of this ‘alternative’ theatre is still a couple of manifestos away.” Consider Silvester’s turn of phrase in the epigraph to Chapter 5—“The Walterdale people […] welcomed the onrushing professional scene”—in comparison with Kareda’s words on theatre that “rushes where the commercial theatre fears to tread.” Alumnae and Walterdale joined the alternative rush they had made possible.
to new Canadian work as were the others, and though it was not concerned with paying its participants, like them it provided a regional alternative to the Stratford Festival (1953–), Shaw Festival (1962–), O’Keefe Centre (1960–) and St. Lawrence Centre (1970–), whose collective relevance was in constant public dispute as proprietors of large venue, foreign, comparatively commercial fare.

UADC, with evolving programming, had been consistent in fulfilling what it regarded as the needs of its audiences and Toronto’s theatre scene since 1918. And along with Toronto Free Theatre, UADC was now part of a “new wind blowing down Berkeley Street” (McDonald 1972) in a new neighbourhood of its own: “Berkeley St. has suddenly become radical chic” (McDonald 1972).78 In fact, so fast were new artists moving into the area that after The Second City cabaret opened in “The Old Firehall Restaurant” on Adelaide Street eight months later (June 1973), “within blocks on Lombard Street,” confusion developed among patrons directing their taxis. Thus, in 1978 UADC’s Firehall Theatre changed its name to “The Alumnae Theatre” (Pritchard 19; UADC “Firehall”).

In his Toronto Star column, Kareda began taking up critical questions of programming similar to Whittaker’s Globe and Mail writings a decade earlier. A month before the firehall was to open, Kareda wrote that though several new theatres have opened in Toronto, mainly dedicated to new Canadian work, “there remains a gap, a vacuum, in Toronto’s theatrical profile, a deficiency which must eventually be remedied if we claim theatrically to be a cultural centre” (Kareda “Toronto”). He urged that new plays from America and Britain should be introduced to

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78 In an article at the time discussing the 1972 openings of UADC’s Firehall Theatre and Toronto Free Theatre, Herbert Whittaker stated that the Firehall’s renovating architect, Ron Thom, “knew about the old gas works complex at 24 Berkeley [where Toronto Free ended up] at least three years ago,” but his plans to convert the building for use not only for a UADC theatre both also for “restaurants, boutiques, and offices” were “thwarted” by a developer (H. Whittaker “A pair”).
Torontonians, as should “rarer works from the international repertoire” (Kareda “Toronto”). Both the University of Toronto’s Drama Centre and Hart House had fallen short in these respects, said Kareda, and he postulated that Alumnae might come to address this gap, as it had for modern works in previous decades (Kareda “Toronto”). He challenged Alumnae to continue to influence Toronto theatre, even as the number of theatres in the city grew:

Can they still hope to compete now that theatrical activity in Toronto, which they at one time inspired, has expanded so radically? Can they continue in their status of superb amateurs when the market for good directors and actors is getting tighter? But I think that if anybody can face such very real worries sensibly and forcefully, it is the inspired madwomen of the Alumnae. They have done the theatre proud. (Kareda “Our most”)

As Canadian theatre professionalized, Alumnae’s place within the theatre community and relationship with emerging professional theatres in Toronto changed again. It was no longer simply a question of offering well-selected, well-produced shows because there were other companies in positions to do so. And many of these companies were professionalizing and finding favour with loyal audiences. But Alumnae had five decades of experience as Toronto’s original “alternate theatre.” It was the city’s first alternative to professional touring shows and to commercial theatre. It was the first to look to Europe and America for challenging modern plays. It had been staging Canadian plays before the early-1970s “alternate” companies were formed. It could be “alternative” and “intellectual” at once.

However, during the late 1960s UADC’s focus on modern theatre had already begun to alter. At the same time that Thom contextualized the company as one that “has always held to a hard line of intellectualism and willingness to experiment in what is new in theatre” (Thom quoted in H. Whittaker “Going”), it began to reveal increasingly politicized tendencies in its play programming with works such as Terry’s Viet Rock (Oct 1968), Abruzov’s The Promise (Nov-Dec 1968), Grass’s Mister Mister (Mar 1969), Ryga’s The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (Nov 1969), van
Itallie’s *America Hurrah* (Mar 1970) and Handke’s *Kaspar* (Oct-Nov 1973). As politically relevant plays were gaining increased acceptance at Toronto’s alternative theatres, Alumnae again was keeping, and setting, the pace.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Alumnae continued to produce modern works like Albee’s *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Mar 1973), Pinter’s *Old Times* (Mar-Apr 1974, directed by H. Whittaker), Stoppard’s *The Real Inspector Hound* (Mar-Apr 1977), Beckett’s *Happy Days* (Nov 1980) and notably four one-acts from Beckett to commemorate his eightieth birthday (Feb 1987). But with a few exceptions—Beaumarchais’s *The Marriage of Figaro* (May 1975), Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (Oct 1975), *The York Cycle* (1977)\(^79\) and Farquhar’s *The Beaux Strategem* (Oct 1978, which commemorated to the month the twentieth anniversary of the company’s earlier production of the play)—it began to move away from the classic plays that had been with them for so long. But Alumnae also began to shift its programming towards strong plays by or about women. The choice was an obvious fit for the group, and paralleled the politicized theatre of the day. Thus, audiences were given Hébert’s *Le Temps Sauvage* (Nov-Dec 1972, directed by John Van Burek), an adapted “text prepared” and directed by Anne Tait called *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Jan 1973), Boothe’s *The Women* (Feb-Mar 1973), the world premiere of Bolt’s *Shelter* (Nov-Dec 1974), Simons’s *Crabdance* (Nov-Dec 1975), Behn’s *The Rover* (April 1976), Helman’s *The Children’s Hour* (Feb 1977), Gombrowicz’s *Princess Ivona* (Mar 1977), Hurley’s *Our Own Particular Jane* (May 1977), Churchill’s *Fen* (Jan-Feb 1987), Glass’s *To Grandmother’s House We Go* (Apr-May 1986), Wills’s *Gertrude Stein and Companion* (Mar-Apr 1988) and Finlay’s *Gone to Glory* (Apr 1989).

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\(^79\) *The York Cycle of Mystery Plays* in particular was a landmark event for its scope. The production was co-produced by Alumnae and the Poculi Ludique Societas in association with the Records of Early English Drama and the Graduate Centre for Study of Drama, with various local groups participating. It was thus something of a return to Alumnae’s early ties to U. of T.
But in order to balance filling the city’s programming gaps with presenting popular fare, Alumnae also began to program more “commercial” plays like Hart’s *Light Up the Sky* (Feb 1977), Durang’s *Beyond Therapy* (Dec 1988) and several plays by Ayckborn and Christie. Then, to serve new plays more frequently, in 1988 it began producing a yearly, juried event called New Ideas as a showcase of new plays, sometimes written by members and sometimes not. In 1990, the company changed its name to the Alumnae Theatre Company and officially added to its mandate a focus on “outstanding plays by and about women” (Alumnae 1993).

By the 1990s, Alumnae was using this programming—commercial, political, plays by and for women and (less and less) modern plays—as something of a recipe of variety that continues to this day. It also began to produce more Toronto, national and world premieres of full-length plays, like the Canadian premieres of Wertenbaker’s *The Love of the Nightingale* (Feb-Mar 1992), Daniels’s *Masterpieces* (Nov-Dec 1993) and the Toronto premieres of Shield’s *Thirteen Hands* (Apr-May 1995) and Barrie’s *The Pear is Ripe* (Oct-Nov 2001). The Toronto premiere of Norman’s *Getting Out* ran as part of a public forum on “Women in Conflict with the Law,” hosted by the Elizabeth Fry Society (Feb 1995). By taking these programming turns, Alumnae again proved to have a discerning eye for niche and public statement, negotiated with a popular interest in giving Toronto audiences the fare that represented the history and place of the company.

**Ever Alternative: History and Nonprofessionalized Practice**

This chapter has started to form a social history of Alumnae by foregrounded changes to its positionings and position-taking during the past century. In a sense, Alumnae’s history reads
as a microhistory of Toronto’s “growth” (again, to borrow from the anthropomorphic language of received histories) from an era of private patronage to an era of public patronage. In large part it is Alumnae’s awareness of the field of theatre and its position within it, because of the education and field-connectedness of its members throughout the past century, that have allowed it to read and take various positions from within the field, yet remain, for the most part, free from professional association and government disciplinary tactics (as a nonprofessionalized theatre). This is evident in its varied position-takings regarding programming choice that were made to address local programming deficiencies, in turns the classics, the moderns, new plays, political plays and plays by and about women. This dynamic illustrates the constitutive interconnectedness of a nonprofessionalized company (and its own continued connections to educational capital) to its counterpart professional and professionalizing companies within a restricted field of theatre production and with the wider field of cultural production.

There is, however, one point of view that I have not discussed beyond passing mention and that is Alumnae’s relationship with Toronto’s professionalizing theatre community from the point of view of public policy. In part, the reason is that the next chapter, on Walterdale, pursues this line of inquiry with rigour, while this chapter focuses on programming decisions as signs of disciplinary and field awareness. A second, more practical, reason is that I did not have access to correspondence pertinent to this line of inquiry as I did with Walterdale. Nevertheless, a few words on the matter of Alumnae and public policy can be added. In his theatre column, Nathan Cohen raised the prickly issue of the Canada Council’s emerging attitude toward amateur theatre in the context of the country’s professionalizing theatre environment. Following the Council’s Fifth Report in 1962, Cohen wrote:

> Take for example its [the Canada Council’s] attitude toward the University Alumnae Dramatic club of Toronto. The record of this group, admirable in every
respect, is exemplary in connection with the fostering of original material. They have done at least six full-length and one-act new plays in the past several years, their program of the new season calls for two new plays by Canadians.

Yet their application for a modest grant of $1,200 to help in the staging of these two plays was turned down by the council on the grounds that theirs is an amateur company, and therefore doesn’t qualify. (Cohen “Reginald”)

Upon citing the Council’s five-time allocation of grant money to the amateur DDF, as well its concurrent rejection of an application by Workshop Productions (because it too was not viewed by the Council as a “professional company”), Cohen concludes “it is regrettable they [Alumnae and Workshop Productions] should be penalized for their alleged lack of bona fides when, in fact, they are doing infinitely more than the formally professional organizations in the cause of the Canadian playwright” (Cohen “Reginald”). If the Canada Council thought that it was servicing nonprofessionalized theatre practice best by funding the sweeping and pseudo-government sanctioned DDF competitions, Cohen would have rather seen the money go directly to those companies developing and producing new plays at already proven capacities.

Alumnae’s success and longevity is due in some ways to its positioning—in part external, in part internal—as both privileged and underprivileged, legitimate and illegitimate. When social patronage was a theatre group’s primary access to cultural funding, Alumnae used its position as comprising of educated, privileged women, when women had limited access to other business affairs, or to raise money for social events. When government funding was available, Alumnae was ineligible because it was not “professional,” though its nonprofessionalized positioning allowed it the programming flexibility that has contributed directly to its longevity. Whereas the astute quality and choice of programming is “professional,” in the sense of internally disciplined, it uses its nonprofessionalized position to affect Toronto’s theatre field.
Chapter 5

Professionalization and Its Discontents:

Edmonton’s Walterdale Theatre Associates in the Professional Era

The Walterdale people [...] welcomed the onrushing professional scene, and have managed to keep peace in it.[...] Walterdale, as an institution, [...] doesn’t envy the professional theatres, it welcomes them.

— Reg Silvester, Edmonton Bullet, 21 October 1983

What is genuinely startling is that a community theatre—the much-abused term “amateur” seems particularly misplaced here—should tackle hot or huge, difficult, esoteric or original scripts. The record often puts the pro theatres to shame.

— Liz Nicholls, Edmonton Journal, 3 July 1988

Hard nosed economics can take a lot of the “fun” out of community theatre and our claim to be one of the few thriving community theatres in Canada has become a little ominous. We are just beginning to see clearly what it was that put all the others out of business. Are we in fact a new community theatre experience in the country, or are we the last of the dinosaurs hanging on for dear life?

— Warren Graves, Walterdale Newsletter, May 1975

On the evening of Sunday, December 4, 1960, thirty-five Edmontonians gathered at the Garneau Cinema, blocks away from the Drama Department at the University of Alberta, to hear John Hirsch speak about the possibility of a professional theatre centre in Edmonton. Two years earlier Hirsch, with Tom Hendry, had co-founded what would become known as the country’s first professional “regional theatre,” the Manitoba Theatre Centre (MTC, 1958- ). Hirsch and Hendry’s semi-professional Theatre 77 (1957-58) and the amateur Winnipeg Little Theatre (1921-58) formed MTC through a process, later advocated by the Canada Council, in which an amateur theatre would “immolate” itself in a “merger” with an extant semi-professional company
in order to birth a federally sponsored professional theatre for that region (Canada Council’s *Fifth Annual Report 1961-62* qtd in Dolgoy 40). Though representatives of Theatre 77 and Winnipeg Little Theatre conceived this process at a “backyard meeting” in order to address their own local conditions (Stuart 171), by 1962 the Canada Council promoted immolation and merger as a viable administrative means through which professionalization could occur in regions that had yet to deliver a sustainable professional company. After two successful seasons, Canada’s culture commentators increasingly viewed MTC as the prototype for regionals across the country. Hirsch was on the lecture circuit.80

For his Edmonton sojourn the board of directors of the short-lived semi-professional Circle Eight theatre (1955-61) had invited Hirsch to discuss how to “save the North” with a permanent professional company (Glenfield 51). The day following Hirsch’s public appearance several members of Edmonton’s theatre and business communities met with him to draft “definite plans to establish the centre” (51). Those taking on organizational roles included the supervisor of Drama for the Province of Alberta and founding president and artistic director of Walterdale (then Edmonton) Theatre Associates, Jack McCreath, and University of Alberta Drama professor Gordon Peacock. But there was concern among several in attendance that this was not yet the time to launch a professional theatre company in Edmonton. McCreath, whose international experience included training with Michel Saint-Denis in London (46), argued, unlike Hirsch, that he did not think Edmonton was ready for a professional theatre, and would

80 MTC’s success and resultant impact on the regional model is a matter of record. By the time Hirsch spoke in Edmonton, MTC had increased attendance from 32,000 to 44,000 in its first two seasons (Hendry “Trends” 248). The Canada Council’s *Annual Report* that year (1960-61) stated that the “emergence of a new form in the Manitoba Theatre Centre” was “an important addition […] and one that might serve as a model to other communities which have the population to support such a venture” (32-33, qtd in Dolgoy 36). Its next *Annual Report* (1961-62) reflected pressure to found enough professional theatres to accommodate forthcoming graduates of the recently established, Canada Council-supported, National Theatre School (NTS, 1960- ).
not be ready until “there exists an audience of regular theatergoers amounting to three per cent of our population” (53), though he “believed that there was an audience ready and waiting for good theatre, if one could tap into it” (Edmonton Journal 17 Dec 1960, cited in Glenfield 46). McCreath viewed his Theatre Associates then as a possible “basis” for professionalizing theatre in Edmonton, but not yet. Peacock warned that Vancouver had tried to found a professional theatre seven times since World War II without success, and that no project of this sort should be attempted until it had the support of “local drama groups” and the province’s Department of Cultural Activities (52). A year later Peacock reflected that plans had been “less than satisfactory” and were “expiring through inertia” (qtd in Glenfield 52). Moreover, according to the Edmonton Journal’s Desmond Bill, “Beyond the faithful following that locally-produced drama has always had there is no general support for [theatre] in Edmonton” (Bill). Yet news of the idea had made its way to England where a Mr. Bryan Griffith Dobbs, a Canadian living abroad, wrote to Peacock with the comment that “rival groups appear to be vying for the prestige of being the nucleus around which a professional theatre centre can be set up” (qtd in Glenfield 53).81

Hirsch’s 1960 appearance in Edmonton represents a region’s negotiation between extant nonprofessionalized practices and the possibility of professionalized ones. Despite insufficient audience interest in sustained theatre, it was apparently no time to ignore the “prestige” that might accumulate from professionalizing one’s group. McCreath’s Theatre Associates and their “rival” Circle Eight were engaged in what Pierre Bourdieu terms “position-taking,” in which artists struggle for “political” positioning, in order to accrue cultural capital, including prestige (“Field” 30-31; Johnson 16-17). Along with the symbolic capital of prestige, the

81 In her Masters thesis Mary Glenfield says that while “rival groups” were “wary of each other,” they “were certainly on speaking terms” and “not at loggerheads” (53).
professionalization of a theatre company could lead to public and private funding support (economic capital), “regional” designation (symbolic capital) and acknowledgement that practising with such a company constitutes valuable professional (that is, professionalizing) experience (educational capital). Because “The space of position-taking can only be defined as a system of differential stances in relation to other possible position-takings, past and present” (Johnson 17), knowledge of MTC’s brief history, as transferred to Edmontonians by Hirsch, constituted a significant step for the city’s amateur and scholastic theatre producers. The visit helped define Edmonton’s theatre field as it stood, and the possibilities available to it by way of a regional comparison: a (limited) national view.

Undoubtedly, professionalizing one’s own amateur group was a prestige move that could generate cultural capital not only locally but also nationally, and Canada was growing increasingly interested in building a professional “national theatre” (a building, or a network of regional buildings). In 1964 the Canada Council argued for increased federal funding for theatre by stating that since the arms-length agency’s inception in 1957 it had observed an “improvement in critical standards of the audiences, thus creating the demand for higher level of performance, which involves increased costs” (Seventh Annual Report 1963-64 4-5, qtd in Dolgoy 48). This was overtly not a call to support the nonprofessional Dominion Drama Festival (DDF) as Canada’s national theatre. To the contrary, professionalizing the practice was implied. The call came not only from the Canada Council and “the creative and performing artists” themselves—increasingly it came from audiences demanding it.
Winnipeg Little Theatre was not the only amateur company to immolate itself in order to establish a regional professional theatre. Calgary’s amateur Workshop 14 (1944-66)\(^{82}\) merged with the Musicians and Actors Club of Calgary to form MAC-14 (1966-68) before professionalizing two years later as the city’s regional, Theatre Calgary (1968- ). And later, the London Little Theatre (1934-70s) professionalized over the course of the 1970s to become the Grand Theatre (c. 1971- ). While David Gardner concludes that “only a few groups made the actual transition to professional status” (in Benson and Conolly 309\(^{83}\)), Walterdale’s position at the time the Citadel formed proves that not all amateur companies valued professionalization as the strongest choice for them. Whereas the Canada Council scrambled to build a professional network of theatres, amateur companies like Edmonton’s Walterdale Theatre Associates were determined to provide local, participatory theatre for a growing audience-base.

By studying the ways and instances in which Walterdale, as a nonprofessionalized theatre, has been impacted during the past half century by government-sponsored professionalization, we can learn not only about the cultural spaces in which nonprofessionalized practices operate, but also about the ways in which professionalized segments of artistic fields are constitutively ill-equipped to comprise the entirety of their fields. According to Bourdieu, the field of art, more evidently than most fields, constructs its objects through “relational thinking” (“Field” 29 emphasis in original). Such thinking considers as “uncritical” those analyses that foreground the “glorification of ‘great individuals’” or their interactions, favouring instead the study of “structural relations—invisible, or visible only through their effects—between social

\(^{82}\) Early Walterdale member Frank Glenfield acted at Workshop 14 under Betty Mitchell two decades earlier.

\(^{83}\) Gardner repeats the same phrase in his entry on the “Little Theatre Movement” in the Canadian Encyclopedia online, but replaces “actual transition” with “difficult transition,” effectively distancing the two practice even further by invoking still stronger, prestige-laden, disciplinary language.
positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups or institutions” (29). Thus, where Bourdieu argues that studies of the “artistic field of a given period and society […] are necessarily inadequate (since the essential explanation of each work lies outside each [“monograph”], in the objective relations which constitute this field)” (29-30), we can say that it is not possible to consider the “great professional theatres” of our time without considering the direct and indirect impact of the amateur groups with which they cohabitate in a given area (both geographical and conceptual) of cultural and economic exchange.

The dominant means by which theatre practices, via their constitutive theatre artists, companies, professional associations and arms-length government funding bodies—i.e. their “social agents”—struggle for position within the field of theatre, I argue, is that of discipline. These social agents, in turns assisted, unassisted or constrained by the government, attempt to discipline adjacent agents in order to gain prestige, legitimacy and accumulated cultural, social and economical capital. Professionalizing associations in particular, by seeking to discipline professional agents, tend also to affect disciplinary controls over the entire field. Professional regional theatres are the primary federal government-sponsored outposts through which professional associations discipline theatre practice with the purpose, following Foucault, of minimizing costs (economic and political), intensifying and expanding power and linking to state apparatuses (unions, politico-legal, cultural, educational, industrial, family and media) (Foucault Discipline 218). Theatre historians, in effect, have made progress in considering how this disciplinary “triple objective” has been attempted in Canada under the banner of cultural nationalism; however, they have afforded little attention to the active and ongoing effects of nonprofessionalized segments of the field in this regard. Influential nonprofessionalized theatres,
I argue, practice theatre in the gaps between professionalized segments in ways that are highly organized, participatory and definitive of both amateur and professional practice.

In order to elucidate certain of the disciplinary relational mechanisms between professional and amateur practices, this chapter considers Edmonton’s Walterdale Theatre Associates in terms of its fifty-year relationship with professionalizing segments of the field of cultural production. It charts Walterdale’s shifting position as “the only place in the city given over entirely to the production of plays” (Bill Journal) in the early 1960s, to one of two alternatives to the professional regional theatre, the Citadel, in the late 1960s, to the city’s nonprofessionalized alternative to several professional “alternative theatres” that began to emerge in the 1970s. To do so, it traces Walterdale’s moments of external and internal position-taking as a nonprofessionalized community theatre situated within the field of theatre practice. In this sense, Walterdale provides a case study that illuminates its positions and position-takings, in turns resistant and benevolent, toward the disciplinary forces of the profession in order to benefit, ultimately, both the profession itself and the field of theatre.

**A Brief History of Walterdale Theatre Associates**

Edmonton’s Walterdale Theatre Associates has produced plays since 27 August 1958. Originally named Edmonton Theatre Associates (TA), the group was founded as an amateur theatre society (registered May 1960) by young actors—“part of a stage-struck generation”

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84 Historical elements of the following section appear in *Hot Thespian Action!* (Whittaker 4-6, 36-41).

85 In her master’s thesis, early Walterdale participant Mary Glenfield lists Jack McCreath, Roman Charnetski, Larry Hertzog, Vera Rourke, Margaret Tewnion and Bud D’Amur as signatories (with witness Connie Hertzog) to the company’s incorporation (48). In a letter to the editor
(Nicholls “Walterdale Theatre”)—who believed that their demographic lacked opportunities to produce theatre in the city. In response to Edmonton’s traditional touring shows playing on large stages like the Northern Jubilee Auditorium’s mainstage, TA gained public and critical recognition in its early years by staging a variety of well-rehearsed popular classics in smaller venues with local actors. 86 From these two perspectives—generational and production-aesthetic-reception—TA engaged in position-taking by offering an alternative to both the form (type of show and auditorium) and the practice (way of production, constitutive participants) of the Jubilee roadhouse, as well as other producers, including the University of Alberta’s Studio Theatre (1949–) and the occasionally producing Circle Eight.

TA gained further status when, just three years into existence, the group secured its own building by renting the derelict John Walter School House at Walterdale Flats—“Edmonton’s oldest one room school house” (‘New’ 1)—from the city for $35 per month (Fritch 1). This they converted into a seventy-seat “thrust-style” theatre space (Rivet 6) and opened with the edgy Osborne play Epitaph for George Dillon (Nov 1961). Here, TA offered a full season of plays, the only group in Edmonton (outside of the University of Alberta) able to do so until the Citadel Theatre opened in 1965. Weighty, relevant and at times locally acclaimed (and twice, locally-written) productions came to characterize the group as one that took theatre production

printed in the Edmonton Journal in 1974, long-time Edmonton thespian Micky Macdonald lists the founders as McCreath, Charnetski, Herzog and Jack Downey. She also lists Tewnion and D’Amur as replacing Charnetski and Downey on the executive during the first year and Barry Vogel as joining the executive two years later. The group officially registered under Alberta’s Societies Act on 13 May 1960. In this sense, among amateur theatres, like Alumnae, it is of the “society” stream, as opposed to the education or military streams, as distinguished by David Gardner (Benson and Conolly 302).

86 Plays such as Hazelwood’s Lady Audley’s Secret and Jack McCreath’s reworking of Swan’s Out of the Frying Pan (both in repertory Aug-Sept 1958, Jubilee Auditorium Social Room), Knott’s Dial M for Murder (Nov 1960, Yardbird Suite) and Christie’s Ten Little Indians (June 1961, Jubilee Auditorium Social Room) were directed by company founder Jack McCreath or members such as Frank Glenfield, Marjorie Knowler and Bob Hedley.
seriously.87 As “the only people consciously trying to fill the need [for theatre in Edmonton],” they fielded “some of Edmonton’s best performers” (“Shavian” 20). Dozens were drawn to the local-minded group as working members. Performances routinely sold out.

By 1962 TA’s position in Edmonton was in hot public debate among culture-goers. In one provocative piece, Edmonton Journal arts columnist Desmond Bill cited several apparently common “criticisms” of TA, arguing that during its first four years it had “made little impression on the potential theatre going public” (Bill “On The Arts”). Reasons included not being able to afford plays with royalties over $50, the small size of the stage and house and therefore the limit on income per show, the distance of the schoolhouse venue from most neighbourhoods and the venue’s “drab” appearance. Bill then noted TA’s accomplishments: it was the “only place in the city given over entirely to the production of plays,” it was the most prolific theatre group in the province over the 1961-62 season and, significantly, over its first four years it had remained “in the black” financially. He concluded with a call to arms: “Unless the theatre can be made exciting and appealing it will never attract the audience that it needs in order to develop. It depends on how successfully this problem is tackled whether theatre will grow in Edmonton or continue its present fitful life.”

When TA moved to the Legion of Frontiersmen Hall in November 1966, professional theatre, in the form of the Citadel, had been playing to strong houses for twelve months. In response, TA sought to clarify its programming niche. Though it continued to stage the same sort

87 Such productions included Lorca’s The House of Bernarda Alba (March-April 1962), Pinter’s The Caretaker (Oct 1963), Ibsen’s Hedda Gabler (April 1964), Anouilh’s Waltz of the Toreadors (March 1966) and Albee’s The Zoo Story (May 1966). The two local plays premiered at the schoolhouse were Mary Baldridge’s Is This a Friendly Visit? (Dec 1961) and Jack McCreath’s Mexico-inspired play Barranca (Nov 1962).
of classics and modern works now staged by the Citadel, it offered edgier work too.\textsuperscript{88} At the legion hall, TA frequently premiered new plays, including five concurrent with Canadian Centennial festivities (March 1967 to March 1968),\textsuperscript{89} while making a name for itself with its “Walterdale Melodrama” as part of Edmonton’s Klondike Days Festival.

Indeed, for many casual theatergoers, TA became synonymous with the summer Melodrama. When TA produced its first two plays in August and September 1958 in the Social Room of the Jubilee Auditorium, one of them was Hazelwood’s melodrama \textit{Lady Audley’s Secret}. In March 1963 TA produced a second melodrama, Johnson’s \textit{Dirty Work at the Crossroads}, as “a passing experiment received gleefully by the audience” (Fritch 2) and then, from 1965 to 1995 TA produced a melodrama every year at Klondike Days, making it one of Edmonton’s most anticipated annual cultural events. The Melodrama was so successful that it frequently earned the company, particularly during the 1970s, enough money to fund a full season of shows. It routinely played to sold-out houses at the Citadel Theatre (presented there because of the Citadel’s proximity to Klondike Days events and because of the Citadel’s substantially larger house). By the end of the 1970s, many counted the Melodrama among Edmonton’s most anticipated events as Klondike Days attracted patrons from across the province and the United States. Wrote Graves in 1974, for the Melodrama, “There’s a very high degree of acceptance in this city. [It] has become a very real contribution to the tourist industry. Now

\textsuperscript{88} At TA, modern plays and classics included Kesselring’s \textit{Arsenic and Old Lace} (Feb 1967), Molière’s \textit{The Imaginary Invalid} (April 1967), Fry’s \textit{A Sleep of Prisoners} (Oct 1967), Albee’s \textit{A Delicate Balance} (Jan 1968) and Coward’s \textit{Hay Fever} (March 1972). Edgier productions included Odets’s \textit{Awake and Sing} (Nov 1970) and Williams’s \textit{The Mutilated} (Feb 1973).

\textsuperscript{89} By comparison, during the same Centennial months the Citadel produced no Canadian plays, new or otherwise, other than an “original revue” called \textit{All the Crazy Things that Crazy People Do} (Dec 1966-Jan 1967). Premieres by George Ryga, Jimmy Richardson, Wilfred Watson and Warren Graves were produced at TA’s Legion Hall. A list of over sixty new plays premiered at Walterdale in its first fifty years appears in \textit{Hot Thespian Action!} (Whittaker 540-43).
brochures sent out by the city and exhibition board include a piece on the melodrama” (quoted in
Sharon Adams 73). But in the late 1980s, when Walterdale moved the melodrama to the
Playhouse (firehall) (due to higher Citadel rental prices and shift summer festival schedules),
attendance suffered, interest waned and the tradition ended in July 1999.

By the time it held its 1970 annual general meeting, TA had officially changed its name
to Walterdale Theatre Associates in honour of its original location. And following protracted
lease negotiations with the city, Walterdale left the legion hall and secured and renovated its
current space at Old Strathcona’s Firehall No. 6, seating 108 (today it seats 145 following a
series of further renovations). This third building gave the company a home in an historic
landmark in a central, and increasingly culturally vibrant, location. Here, Walterdale further
sought to clarify its niche by introducing youth artist development and children’s programming
with its Young Walterdale initiative and Christmas pantomimes, while producing local work and
furthering its burgeoning reputation for producing the summer melodrama. To satisfy internal
and public interest, it also turned more frequently to commercial fare, while still producing
challenging modern classics and provocative works (many of the latter, Canadian).90 Both

90 Commercial fare included Shaffer’s Sleuth (Nov 1975), Stoppard’s Enter a Free Man (Oct
1976) and Simon’s God’s Favorite (Feb 1977) and Barefoot in the Park (Jan 1978).

Classics included Chekhov’s On the Harmfulness of Tobacco (April 1979), The Cherry
Orchard (May 1987) and Ivanov (April-May 1999); Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale (Oct
1983), The Merry Wives of Windsor (Nov 1986), The Comedy of Errors (Oct 1994), The Taming
of the Shrew (March 2003), King Lear (Feb 2006) and Antony and Cleopatra (April 2007);
Ibsen’s Ghosts (April-May 1985) and An Enemy of the People (March 2001); Miller’s The
Crucible (April-May 1986, May 2002); Wycherley’s The Country Wife (Sept-Oct 1987, January
2001); Behn’s The Rover (April 1989); Williams’s A Streetcar Named Desire (Jan-Feb 1995)
and The Night of the Iguana (Jan-Feb 2003); Molière’s Tartuffe (April-May 1996); and
Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus (Jan 2000).

Provocative Canadian works included French’s Leaving Home (Jan-Feb 1975), Ritter’s
The Girl I Left Behind Me (March 1977), Mitchell’s Davin the Politician (Nov 1979),
Tremblay’s Les Belles Soeurs (May 1980 with Théâtre Francais d’Edmonton, and Feb 2005),
Walker’s Zastrozzi (Oct 1980), Fraser’s Mutants (Jan 1981 world premiere), Ryga’s The Ecstasy
variety and high standards continue to attract new practitioners and audiences, as it produces “some of the most challenging and controversial scripts in the repertoire” (Nicholls “Walterdale Theatre takes”).

In the early 1980s, under the perceptive guidance of University of Alberta Modern Languages professor Vivien Bosley (artistic director 1979-81, president 1982-84), Walterdale took up the nationalism of the previous decades’ new “alternative” professional theatre companies by holding a nation playwriting competition, in honour of the province’s seventy-fifth anniversary, and producing nine new plays (six of them full length) by writers who included Brad Fraser (his first full-length production), Warren Graves, Gordon Pengilly, and Barbara Sapergia and Geoffrey Ursell. Though Walterdale has produced over sixty new plays since the mid-1960s, it was Bosley’s vision to support playwriting—particularly full-length plays—that in large part helped to redefine the place of Walterdale’s programming in Edmonton beyond the melodrama form.

Then, between 1988 and 1993, Walterdale garnered a string of Elizabeth Sterling Haynes Awards for Outstanding Amateur Production, one in each of the first six years the awards were handed out.91 In 1994, one year after winning the (not-amateur-specific) Sterling Award for Outstanding Costume Design for Jane Barclay’s work on Anderson’s Elizabeth the Queen of Rita Joe (March 1990), Brennen’s Tiger’s Heart (March 1998), Clark’s Jehanne of the Witches (Jan 1999) and Saint Frances of Hollywood (April-May 2001) and Highway’s The Rez Sisters (Oct 2005).

Among Walterdale’s provocative productions, American Mart Crowley’s play The Boys in the Band created a stir in April 1977. The Edmonton Journal concluded its mention of the controversial production by noting, “What bigger tribute could you get, after all, than a standing ovation from artistic director John Neville and the other Citadel Theatre members who went along with him one night?” (“Footlights”).

91 Walterdale’s six Sterling Awards for Outstanding Amateur Production were awarded for productions of Hare’s A Map of the World (Feb-March 1988), Levin’s Deathtrap (Nov 1988), Knott’s Wait Until Dark (Jan-Feb 1990), Shaffer’s The Royal Hunt of the Sun (April 1991), French’s Jitters (April-May 1992) and Anderson’s Elizabeth the Queen (April-May 1993).
(April-May 1993), Walterdale received an Outstanding Contribution to Theatre in Edmonton award, which at once rewarded the company for nearly four decades of work, and rendered it ineligible for future recognition by the Sterling committee.

Today, Walterdale is the longest running (non-university) theatre company in Edmonton, and among the longest running in Canada. It has produced over five hundred plays (including over sixty new works) while continuing to operate as a not-for-profit amateur community theatre. It produces a full season of six or seven productions at Walterdale Playhouse. It is run by an active twelve-member board of directors, ten of whom are elected annually, except for the president who is elected biennially from among the company’s constitutive paying membership (of about three hundred) and the artistic director who is hired biennially. Its mandated objective is to “establish and promote vital, entertaining and self-sustaining amateur theatre in Edmonton” (Walterdale Constitution). Under this markedly wide-open mandate, Walterdale maintains a flexible niche among other Edmonton theatres by relying on programming variety. Plays are chosen by the artistic director who proposes the season’s shows, and their directors, to the board. Participation in all aspects of play production remains on a volunteer, unpaid basis, which sets it apart from a number of other amateur or semi-amateur theatres in the country, like Alumnae, that sometimes pay directors, actors, designers, technicians or front-of-house and building staff. (Since 2006 Walterdale has paid a part-time administrator.) Participant theatre artists at Walterdale are counted among the paying members and vary widely in age, experience and

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92 In two articles acknowledging Walterdale’s fiftieth anniversary, the Edmonton Journal erroneously labeled Walterdale “Canada’s second-oldest amateur company” (Nicholls “Walterdale Theatre” and Nicholls “Amateur”). In fact there are several older amateur companies in English Canada alone, including Ottawa Little Theatre (1913- ), Toronto’s Alumnae Theatre Company (1918- ), Regina Little Theatre (1926- ) and the Victoria Theatre Guild at Langham Court Theatre (1929- ). Like Walterdale, several have at least one paid staff member; unlike Walterdale, some occasionally pay production participants too.
training. While a few may become members who work on a specific show, most return for at least a few shows (Whittaker “Artistic” 1), and some have stayed on over the course of five or ten years or more to become part of a returning core of artists who may also practice theatre in other capacities around the city. Most specialize in one or two capacities, but some learn a variety of theatre skills. Still, most members (around two-thirds) are not involved in theatre production at all; their participation takes the form of audience support. Though membership numbers have ebbed and flowed, these demographics have remained relatively consistent since the 1960s.


93 Warren Graves, as membership chairman, reminded Walterdale members of the Exton premiere in the June 1975 *Walterdale Newsletter*:

I saw Frank Glenfield […] and he told me that the National Arts Centre in Ottawa has discovered a British playwright called Clive Exton and they are thinking of bringing his *Have You Any Dirty Washing Mother Dear?* to Canada. Frank wants to take a helicopter over the premiere opening and drop copies of our old program. Modestly, of course. Graves’s humourous view underlines the pressing point that professions tend to erase the work of nonprofessionalized segments of the field for purposes that include publicity gained from proclaiming “firsts” (Graves “Who, Us?”).
occasionally made Walterdale Playhouse available to local professional groups to rehearse, including Catalyst Theatre, Theatre Network and the Edmonton International Fringe Festival (for which Walterdale was an original venue in 1982). Reciprocally, from 1965 to the end of the 1980s, Walterdale’s Klondike Days melodrama was held at the Citadel, representing what the executive referred to in a thank-you telegram to the Citadel’s Olive Findlay in 1976 as “a happy example of professional & community theatre working together,” characterized by Findlay’s “friendship & cooperation” (Walterdale telegram to Findlay). This point, that of Walterdale’s close and benevolent relationship with Edmonton’s emerging theatre profession over the past fifty years, characterizes a wider and complex struggle to refine the relevancy of participatory, nonprofessionalized theatre during the professional era.

The Citadel as the Professionalizing Outpost in the Field

The Citadel as the Professionalizing Outpost in the Field

The opening of the Citadel Theatre in November 1965 changed Edmonton’s theatre landscape immediately. It was the first dedicated professional theatre company in the province and its appearance meant that TA and the University of Alberta’s Studio Theatre were no longer the only season-producing theatres in town.94 For a while “people didn’t come out for [TA’s]

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94 As Edmonton’s longest running season-producing entities, Walterdale and Studio Theatre have a complex history of association. While historian E. Ross Stuart states that in the 1950s and early 1960s “the best amateurs preferred to perform” at Studio, which “hurt” local groups (104) like Walterdale, former Walterdale president Vivien Bosley called theirs “a long history of happy association. Many students from the drama department have acted on the Walterdale stage before and after their graduation; several have directed for us; conversely, many of us have acted in public performances at Studio and in in-house drama department productions” (letter June 1982). That Stuart’s and Bosley’s divergent comments were written within two years of each other attests to this complexity. Moreover, Gordon Peacock told the Edmonton Journal in 1962 his “Studio Theatre is not ‘a group’” (Bill), which meant that Walterdale (then TA) was the only
auditions because everyone figured they’d be snapped up for professional contracts,” observed longtime Walterdale member Frank Glenfield (qtd in Nicholls “Walterdale: The Little”). As the profession crept in—by 1961 as a roadhouse and rental venue the Jubilee Auditorium had all but closed its doors to non-union workers (Rivet 4)—TA increasingly dealt with internal redefinition and, in a sense, re-branding, even as it supported the profession.

The Citadel helped Edmonton participate in the post-centennial fervour of what Michael McKinnnie calls “civic building projects funded in the name of the centenary [which] remain the most enduring and useful local benefit of national patronage” (26). In order to do so, it fulfilled the Canada Council’s emerging criteria for a “regional theatre.”95 The Massey Commission’s recommendations in 1951 had urged the establishment of a “national theatre” for Canada by supporting “regional theatres” in the country’s major urban centres. Beginning in 1957 the Canada Council, with Vincent Massey as its inaugural chair, sought to address many of the Commission’s recommendations. This was a milestone investment in Canadian cultural and economic capital, one that presumed, before any federal funds were in place, that there was already a population interested in supporting the theatre and “bearing the brunt of its expenses” season-producing group in Edmonton between 1961, when Circle Eight disbanded, and 1965, when the Citadel opened.

95 These criteria included “a regular season of plays,” productions that could tour to “small cities within its general area” or further a-field once or twice a year, provide children’s theatre and organize theatre training for “embryo actors” (Canada Council Fifth Annual Report 1961-62 4, qtd in Czarnecki 35-36).

However, Citadel founder Joseph Shoctor adamantly opposed classifying his theatre among other regionals. “Our plays are not regional. [W]e show the theatre of the world.[…] Show me any other theatre in this country that’s been able to attract the world-class directors that we have and the world-class actors that we have” (qtd in Falkenstein 7). Elsewhere Shoctor stated, “We are not a local theatre. We are not a regional theatre. We are a Canadian institution. We are the third largest organization in this country, after Stratford and Shaw. We call ourselves now, ‘Canada’s Citadel Theatre.’ We know we are” (qtd in Bessai “Canada’s” 151). But if Shoctor rejected the Citadel’s “regional” classification in terms of programming, personnel and purview, Canada’s state-funded cultural apparatus, with the Canada Council as advocate and jury, viewed it otherwise, as one among several.
A volunteer board of directors at each regional, ostensibly representing local corporate income strains, would guide ongoing fundraising efforts for their company. Insomuch as regionals were to operate as fully professionalized companies, they were under contractual obligations and the watchful eye of professional associations that strengthened as each new regional opened. In this sense the Citadel, like other regionals, functions as a Canadian Actors’ Equity Association (CAEA) outpost that disciplines not only its constitutive Citadel practitioners, but in varying degrees practitioners working in the rest of the field of theatre in that region.

Walterdale’s early relationship with the Citadel provides an important example of the type of negotiations that arise between amateur and professional practices in a professionalizing field. While searching for a new location of its own for the upcoming 1964-65 season, TA’s venue search committee of two, members Ron Wigmore and Frank Glenfield, were informed that the Salvation Army was selling its downtown “Citadel” location for $90,000. Wigmore and Glenfield were interested in the building as a new location for the group, but TA’s “interim” president was not. Charles Anderson would neither allow the two to pursue the Citadel location, nor present it to the executive as an option, purportedly out of Anderson’s general distrust for theatre people in financial matters (Rivet 8; Glenfield 67). Instead, local lawyer and former actor and director Joseph Shoctor purchased the building. He then approached TA to be a seed group for his professional company. Some members saw this as their moment to professionalize the six-year-old TA; but others “refused to be swayed, sensing that they would simply become lost

Shoctor acted under Elizabeth Sterling Haynes and participated in earlier amateur theatre productions in Edmonton (Glenfield 67). He had also directed Circle Eight’s final production in May 1961, Williams’s A Streetcar Name Desire, at Victoria Composite High School (Glenfield 54). As Erika Norrie comments in her Masters thesis, Shoctor could hardly have missed out on the Citadel find because he “could see the old Salvation Army building […] from the window of his law office” (Norrie 15). For more on Shoctor see Glenfield, and Bessai “Canada’s.”
in the whirlpool of amateur, semi-professional and professional traps” while relinquishing their $10,000 building fund and their membership list for “a vague promise that they would have first call on auditions” (Rivet 8). TA declined Shoctor’s offer, but not without “much heated debating” and the loss of some early members (9). Though TA and the Citadel had negotiated a divide between professional and amateur practice in the city, those involved maintained an amicable “rapport” with each other (Glenfield 67), and thus between their professionalizing and nonprofessionalized work. Moreover, TA agreed to provide its “list of several hundred active theatre supporters” in Edmonton to the new company for use in the Citadel’s initial mail out (67).

“[C]hange in the space of […] artistic possibilities,” says Bourdieu,

is the result of change in the power relation which constitutes the space of positions. When a new […] artistic group makes its presence felt in the field of […] artistic production, the whole problem is transformed, since its coming into being, i.e. into difference, modifies and displaces the universe of possible options; the previous dominant productions may, for example, be pushed into the status […] of outmoded [déclassé]. (“Field” 32)

When the Citadel opened, the moment confirmed the impact and mechanics at play between the positions of extant companies when a new company forms within artistic fields. The opening festivities the week of 10 November 1965 made it clear that while professional theatre was the medium, the message was socialite pageantry defined as something to which Edmontonians, perhaps even those accustomed to attending TA’s productions, might aspire, if Shoctor’s professional theatre dared to take them there. As Women’s editor of the Edmonton Journal, Ruth Bowen recounted the “dignitaries” who, on the eve of the Citadel’s opening, arrived onstage for the ribbon cutting surrounded by “great baskets of gold and bronze chrysanthemum” in front of “the gold upholstered seats [that the next evening would] be filled by a gilded audience” paying $100 for a ticket and a “buffet supper” (“Dedication”). At the ribbon cutting were representatives
of the Queen (Lieutenant-Governor), the Province, the Academy, the Law and sundry affluent municipal personages who paraded themselves across the nation’s newest gold- and bronze-laden “stage” of maturation. Bowen had kept her socialite column buzzing for weeks with Citadel-related words. In a piece titled “Everyone Talks About ‘The Citadel’” she announced, “All the talk is of theatre…. At morning coffee parties, at evening sherry parties, hostesses promote The Citadel.” She went on to list the names of nearly a dozen “hostesses entertaining this week on behalf of The Citadel.” On opening night, the “glittering audience of formally dressed patrons” filled the 277-seat auditorium, under “its gleaming chandeliers and gold plush seats” (“Gala”). Theatre in Edmonton was set to become upper middle class socialite entertainment.

The moment is also an example of what Alan Filewod calls a “citation […] of the postcolonial crises of authenticity and displacement” (Performing xvii), in which markedly colonial pageantry anoints the untapped (if to an extent, enthusiastic) regions with the promise of cultural elevation. This “European look” heralded the regional arrival of a Canadian theatre, in Tom Hendry’s estimation, “modeled more on European patterns” than North American ones (Hendry “Trends” 244). The amateur TA, with its origins in a one-room schoolhouse and despite its founding roster of European expatriates, could have hardly fit the bill.

Whereas Walterdale, Studio and a few occasional-producers such as Circle Eight had thus far constitutively defined Edmonton theatre practice, the opening of the Citadel immediately redefined such groups as alternatives not only to itself but also to an imminent theatre profession. What might have been articulated in lay terms as the Citadel “setting the bar” for its nonprofessional counterparts effectively meant that it re-articulated the artistic possibilities of the field of production. As a new producing “social agent,” the Citadel would “help to define and
produce the value” (37) of plays presented in Edmonton. Indeed, weeks before the Citadel had staged a public performance, the coffee and sherry parties—dually attended by the upcoming premiere’s actors, according to Bowen (“Dedication”)—contributed to framing audience expectations. The constellations of possibilities were regimented within “professional” expectations, even before any actor walked onstage and “the Citadel flicked the switches for the first time on professional theatre in Edmonton” (Westgate “Extraordinary”).

Professional possibilities, such as they may have been understood, arguably prefigured Barry Westgate’s unapologetically positive review of the Citadel’s premiere production, Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

[T]his had been an extraordinarily fine theatre experience [in which the actors] had accomplished a remarkable evening’s work.[…]

What an effective way to open a new enterprise. What a convincing fashion in which to present the label of the type of theatre Joe Shoctor and his minions intend for Edmonton from the stage of their exciting little playhouse. (Westgate “Extraordinarily”)

Following these superlatives, Westgate was sure to mention the cultural capital gained not only by “Shoctor and his minions” in opening the theatre, but also by the actors and the play. Bernard Engle (as George) “came here with an impressive reputation,” while the play “is the best and most famous American drama since *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman*, and probably a more universal play than either.[…] It has a revered status already among those of the theatre.” In Westgate’s eyes, the Citadel had met the nearly insurmountable challenge posed by Albee’s work. His critical voice helped define Shoctor’s “minions”—not the least of which included his nine-member board of directors who had been so prominent in the weeks preceding the production—as Edmonton’s newly born theatrical elite.

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97 A similar analysis of emerging production companies might be usefully accomplished for the impacts and relative positionings of Canada’s alternative theatres during the 1970s.
By comparison, though Westgate (and Desmond Bill before him) had penned many positive reviews of TA’s plays in the past, his review the next day of TA’s production of Williams’s *You Touched Me* was damning: “Recitation, it seems, is the strongest talent. And that has almost completely destroyed the mood of this particular theatre involvement” (“Tedium”). Bourdieu’s dictum, “the fundamental stake in [artistic] struggles […] is the monopoly of the power to consecrate producers or products” (“Field” 42), underlines the constructive power Westgate wielded on his readership during the forty-eight hours in which he wrote the two reviews. Comparisons between the Citadel and TA by the Edmonton Journal’s arts readers were inevitable. Judging from the generalized mode in which Westgate wrote of the two productions—“those of the theatre” revere Albee’s play *versus* “this particular theatre involvement”—he trod with awareness of fanning a possible rivalry where just three years earlier, Bill had written “there is no general support for [theatre] in Edmonton.”

The Citadel, or more importantly the professional possibilities of the Citadel, redefined what it meant to be theatre producers, actors, theatre students, audiences and critics in Edmonton. Studio could now train actors who might (one hoped) work locally at the professional company, TA could provide parallel stage experience, and the Citadel could reciprocally benefit from Studio and TA talent. And perhaps to an even greater extent, the Citadel had contributed to redefining the possibilities of middle-class, socialite entertainment in the city. Locally, these redefined power relations, entirely hierarchical, altered artistic and critical expectations. Nationally, in (improvised) concert with Equity and the Canada Council, they opened up new
avenues of disciplinary control for both government-sponsored cultural institutionalization and affiliated professional associations.98

“Local Talent”

In the late 1960s, with a professional “regional” company now attracting public and critical attention, TA sought to visibly articulate its operational niche. “We have a definite function to perform,” announced TA’s incoming artistic director Ron Wigmore in 1967. In paraphrasing Wigmore’s “more exuberant approach” to programming, Westgate concluded that both TA and Studio Theatre “continue to offer a competent and sometimes exceptionally well couched alternative to the professional company [which] is advantageous both to the theatre and the theatre-going public” (“Welcome”). Though they preceded the Citadel, TA and Studio were made “alternative” by the younger professional theatre. But in what ways was it “alternative”?

Certainly, Shoctor’s (and others’) “dream” of bringing “professional theatre to Edmonton audiences” had been realized: “Edmontonians [now had] a chance to see not only the renovated Citadel, but professional theatre in action” (“Gala”). But if Edmontonians had presumed the new professional theatre would immediately open up scores of careers for local talent in the region, they were wrong. Between ten and fifty per cent of the Citadel’s participant actors were local during the company’s first twenty-five years, and they typically filled “secondary roles while Eastern and international imports are given the leads” (Falkenstein 7). Scholar Len Falkenstein observes that for Shoctor, “local” and “regional” “carry the pejorative connotations of

98 A June 1982 panel discussion printed in Theatre Research in Canada features six former Canada Council theatre officers relating their experiences. The overall impression is one of accomplishment by way of bureaucratic improvisation, flavoured with the best of intentions. (Kilbourn et al 165-92)
parochialism and backwardness” (7), even though regional theatres were the homes of so-called “mainstream” activity. The Journal’s Liz Nicholls put it another way: during the 1970s and 1980s at the Citadel, “‘Local talent’ was deemed an oxymoron” (“Stepping”). Its low local actor employment rate would be an ongoing source of controversy.

While the Citadel attracted audiences, TA’s own practices did not so much change as they gained new relevance. As the city’s only amateur theatre, TA continued to utilize local talent. Now, however, this was a feature that distinguished it from the city’s professional theatre. Due to the Citadel’s emerging casting habits, working actors living in Edmonton, including those graduating from the University of Alberta’s BFA acting program (1964- ), were finding no more substantive opportunities for professional work. TA remained a legitimate, if disciplinarily problematic, option for local work. And while the Citadel’s casting habits did not diminish its attendance numbers—perhaps because, as Falkenstein argues, they actually mirrored a “typically Edmonton” mentality with an “insatiable appetite for recognition on the national and international stages” (7)—it is important to note that TA in fact benefited from the Citadel’s policies. By definition, all of TA’s amateur working members were local talent, which in part accounted for the fact that TA’s attendance numbers rarely dipped below ninety per cent during the Citadel’s first two decades.

TA’s focus on the local applied not only to casting, but to programming as well. Between 1961 and 1971 TA premiered eight new plays by local writers (and one by Alberta’s George Ryga). Then in the summer of 1974, Warren Graves’s melodrama Chief Shaking Spear Rides Again or the Taming of the Sioux staged the very local issue of an amateur theatre attempting to secure a new home for itself, giving Edmontonians Graves’s take on TA’s own move to its firehall home (Graves was a lead negotiator for the move on behalf of TA). Edmonton’s mayor
and various TA personalities were lampooned in front of sold out international Klondike Days audiences on the Citadel’s mainstage.\(^{99}\) Staging the Walterdale Melodrama each year was the Citadel’s way of achieving some local cachet, while TA could continue to underline its commitment to the Edmonton community. It also conformed well to a suggestion the Canada Council had made in its 17\(^{th}\) Annual Report 1973-74 in March, just months before *Chief Shaking Spear Rides Again* opened. In a rare mention of nonprofessional practice the Canada Council suggested, “Little theatre [sic] companies in the cities enroll the services of local people to create pieces in which neighbourhood problems and history are dramatized” (17, qtd in Dolgoy 123). Considering discussion in the preceding years about kick-starting the professional careers of Canada’s playwrights, as the professional “alternative theatres” had been doing, this was a curious statement. Importantly, it acknowledged nonprofessional theatre’s place in the field of creative production nationwide.

Though the Citadel’s programming met with public and critical approval, it took a decade before many of Edmonton’s theatre artists could warm up not only to the regional’s casting habits, but also artists’ remuneration. By the end of 1976, the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT), the Citadel among them, completed negotiations of the Second Canadian Theatre Agreement with the recently formed CAEA.\(^{100}\) As Warren Graves wrote in the

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\(^{99}\) For more on Graves’s *Chief Shaking Spear Rides Again* see *Hot Thespian Action!* (Whittaker 39-41).

\(^{100}\) PACT’s pre-1976 predecessor, the League of Canadian Theatres (LOCT), negotiated the First Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) with CAEA’s predecessor, the Canadian Executive Committee (CEC) of American Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), in 1974. The First CTA was “the first national contract regulating the rates and working conditions for its members across the country” (Dolgoy 17).

CAEA’s history is complex as it emerged from its American counterpart with autonomy and increased negotiating and disciplinary powers. The New York based AEA (1913–) represented professional Canadian actors from 1954 to 1976. More specifically, as Dolgoy explains, “In 1955, the Canadian operation [of AEA] opened as the Canadian Advisory
December 1976 *Walterdale Newsletter*, the Citadel was finally “offering not only artistic integrity but also financial dignity to theatrical talent.” With some sarcasm, Graves went on to reflect that “for some reason, [artists] are expected to be either rich beyond dreams or starving, and they are cuter when they are starving.” The point, not new, was that navigating the professional value (both monetary and ideological) of art was among modern society’s most arduous tasks, particularly when a city’s interest in live performance is (still) being coaxed out of it. Professionalization was on Graves’s mind in the 1970s because his acting and writing careers were well on their way. One aims, Graves said, for a time when “the artist arrives and he/she may now become a first class citizen” (Dec 1976).

**Disciplining the Field, Fielding the Discipline**

With the city’s only professional theatre came operational guidelines from the country’s professional associations. Through the 1950s and 1960s, American Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), with which Canadian professional actors identified, took the position that “Equity often made concessions to accommodate the individual conditions of a theatre, and that, after all, the

Committee of Actors’ Equity Association (CAC); in 1963, it became the Canadian Executive Committee (CEC); and, in 1976, it became the fully independent CAEA” (21) when, on April 1st, two thousand Canadian actors split with AEA to form the CAEA.

The 1955 founding of CAEA came from the [professional theatre] community’s and AEA’s belief that, even in a period where there was no expectation of a subsidy system, there was a sufficient body of business beyond that of the Stratford Festival, to support a professional stage actors’ association. The establishment of CAEA was felt by some as a validation of their “professional” status (171).

Dolgoy cites former CEC Chair Dan MacDonald’s recollection in an interview that actors working in the newly formed alternative theatres significantly influenced Canadian Equity’s move toward autonomy (Dolgoy 120). Dolgoy also cites a “rubric,” explained by CAEA member Frank Hogg, that “Canadian Equity […] is legally not a union, but a ‘voluntary association which acts like a union when necessary’” (qtd in Dolgoy 151). “By 1979, CAEA was capable of achieving its demands through the threat of labour action” (Dolgoy 171).
working conditions in Canada would be determined by the Canadian actors” (AEA executive secretary Angus Duncan in 1954, qtd in Dolgoy 21). But with increased professionalization, theatres that did not pay their actors were less easy to ignore. As early as 1962 the AEA’s Canadian representative began to articulate an increasingly aggressive stance toward what he called theatre communities that would often “drift back towards local blackmail and amateurism” (he excluded Vancouver, Winnipeg and Montréal, which he thought were professionalizing more smoothly than others) (Larry McCance qtd in Dolgoy 42). He argued that the AEA’s Canadian Advisory Committee (CAC) should become the Canadian Executive Committee (CEC) so that it could, for example, “grant concessions from the Standard Contracts to meet specific national and local conditions” and to “discipline members” (Dolgoy’s wording) “normally resident in Canada” (qtd in Dolgoy 43). These were strong words that revealed AEA’s Canadian administrators as determined, on behalf of Canadian member professionals, to control theatre practice in Canadian cities. These were divisive dialectical issues characterized not only as professional/nonprofessionalized, but also as national/local, large city/smaller city, collective/individual and vocational/avocational. They proved difficult to administer from afar, and difficult to react to on the ground.

Professional associations like Equity gradually began to take disciplinary action upon their members, which in turn influenced the operations of nonprofessionalized theatres across the country. Whereas some reacted by professionalizing, Walterdale defending its practices. In March 1969 the TA executive dealt with what early member John Rivet terms its “first real brush with an Equity member” (16). Members of the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA, 1943- ) cast in Citadel productions were required to work under Equity agreements. This was the case for the actor who, having joined Equity in order to act at the
Citadel, appeared in TA’s Canadian premiere of Ustinov’s social satire *Halfway Up the Tree* (Feb-Mar 1969) under a verbal agreement that he would return a $250 payment made to him by Walterdale as a matter of course. When, about a month after the show closed, the actor reported to the executive that he would only return a portion of the $250 following word from his accountant that he would be charged income tax on the cheque payment, the board took initiative by passing a practical, as well as a symbolic, motion: “That the artistic director advise the director of every production when casting his [sic] show that any members of ACTRA, or EQUITY, or any other performers union [sic], be reminded that this is an amateur theatre and they will not be paid for their services” (WEMM 25 Mar 1969101). The motion aimed to alleviate future misunderstandings regarding the terms by which all participants would be engaged by TA.

In fields of cultural production, that which “differentiates […] the professionals from the amateurs” are the varying degrees to which practitioners in a field of cultural production apprehend a “space of possibility” within which they define the “problems, references [and] intellectual benchmarks” associated with their positions (Bourdieu “Principles” 176, *emphasis in original*). TA’s motion drew a disciplinary line between the terms of production of constituents’ creative work at TA and the terms required from Equity. It reacted to a shift in the way Equity sought to discipline the entire field of theatre practice, both professional and, by proxy, nonprofessional, by way of its Edmonton outpost, the Citadel. The motion responded to Equity’s disciplinary regulations, which affected Equity artists engaged under Equity’s terms, but also dictated the terms under which nonprofessionals could work alongside Equity members at nonprofessionalized venues like TA.

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101 Throughout, “WEMM” refers to “Walterdale’s Executive Meeting Minutes” followed by the meeting’s date, as listed in the Works Cited.
Thus, while Equity increasingly sought to protect its members, its internal policies had real consequences for the wider participatory aspects of the practice. Questions arose as to the value not of actors and acting generally—certainly all concerned wanted all practitioners to have fair cultural value—but, in a comparative sense, the value of practitioners working side-by-side on the same production. TA’s motion meant that all acting work on its stage was of equal value (symbolic and monetary), regardless of individuals’ emerging professional designations. Two performers on the same stage deserved equal compensation for their time, and under TA’s volunteer practice this meant no pay to either. Yet, while the volunteer board was now required to inform all would-be TA participants of these stated terms at the outset of their involvement with the company, the responsibility ultimately fell on participant actors to engage with TA openly and honestly about their professional association’s requirements. In the case of the actor in Halfway Up the Tree, he was called to TA’s June executive meeting to explain, and perhaps agree to pay back, the full amount according the verbal agreement. Instead, and understandably, not wanting to pay (through income tax or otherwise) to have appeared in a production, the actor determined he would need to consult his lawyer (WEMM 25 March 1969, 5 June 1969). TA’s extant documents make no further mention of the incident though Rivet, who was artistic director at the time, reports it lasted two years (16). Ultimately, it led to the company considering status, and eventually registering, as a charitable organization.

With training and experience behind them, professionals use their acquired savvy to navigate the field of theatre in order to fashion a career, to accumulate cultural capital or simply “to be [or stay] in the game” (176). Yet repeatedly, Walterdale has problematized this differentiation. It has navigated the field of theatre with professional acumen—operated as if professional in all ways but monetarily—in order to maintain its devoutly nonprofessionalized
practice. The ways in which it has done so provide examples of the difference between naïve amateurish practice and nonprofessionalized practice.

**The Expanding Profession**

If the opening of the Citadel and the corroborative arrival of professionalizing concerns had brought challenges of self-definition to TA—now officially *Walterdale Theatre* Associates—the 1970s witnessed an explosion of professionalizing changes to Edmonton’s theatre landscape. In response to what Edmonton playwright Isabelle Foord called the Citadel’s “pedestrian offerings of New York smashed hits, lugubrious Irish plays about ‘the troubles’ and killer-Canadiana” (Foord 67), five professional “alternative theatres” were formed, several directly or indirectly by professors and graduates of the University of Alberta’s theatre programs: Theatre 3 (1970-81), Northern Light Theatre (1975- ), Theatre Network (1975- ), Catalyst Theatre (1977- ) and Workshop West Theatre (1978- ). Except for Theatre 3 (which was alternative to the Citadel insomuch as it eschewed commercial plays), all set out to produce Canadian, even specifically Albertan, plays.¹⁰²

Their “alterity” (to the regional Citadel as well as to the nonprofessionalized Walterdale) and their variety were not solely defined in terms of programming. They also sought to redefine the Citadel’s brand of “professional,” which was overwhelmingly non-local and necessarily Equity-based. For example, Network and Catalyst were founded as “non-Equity” collectives. CBC drama critic George Melnyk described Network in 1976 as “semi-professional,” a term he

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¹⁰² For overviews of these theatres see Anne Nothof’s Introduction to *The Alberta Advantage* (vii-xi), Diane Bessai’s article “Canada’s Citadel and the Alternatives” and Isabelle Foord’s “Edmonton Update.”
defined, conspicuously, as referring to “groups receiving little and often no funding [operating] like poorly-trained guerrilla bands, lacking experience, money, and power [who] have made up for their deficiencies with enthusiasm, commitment, and self-sacrifice” (135). He thus articulated a nod toward status and hierarchies of the term “professional,” a fact that the Edmonton alternative companies, and Walterdale, were positioning themselves to address. Comparatively, David Barnet described his (then) social action theatre group, Catalyst, as providing “acting done by nonprofessionals”—that is, non-conservatory trained actors (qtd in Bessai “Canada’s” 153). Barnet’s distinction referred to their training and non-association status, not, for example, payment. Added to these five companies was the “escapist” (Graves Oct 1975) dinner theatre Stage West (1974- ). Each, notably Stage West, immediately drew talent and, by some estimations, audiences away from Walterdale.

Thus, by the fall of 1975 Foord could write in Canadian Theatre Review that theatre is alive and thriving here. The reasons? Timing, probably, coupled with an economic boom and an entertainment-hungry populace wearied from being on the cultural and geographic lunatic fringes of the world. And though opportunities abound, the general artistic climate is nevertheless still one of caution and respectability. (67)

Foord’s enthusiasm, though primarily intended as a reflection of Edmonton’s new professional milieu, was certainly reflected in Walterdale’s situation as well. Graves wrote in the Walterdale Newsletter, “Many of the people in the City who are now ‘names to be conjured with’ in theatre owe a lot to the fact that they could pass through the Walterdale experience” (“Possibly”). Moreover,

Many of them have stayed on to “do a show a year for Walterdale” which is great except that it has given us a standard of production that is unreasonably high for an amateur theatre. In the burgeoning theatrical scene of Edmonton, there are now many opportunities for such people to exercise their talents and the number of ACTRA and EQUITY members is growing, indicating growing opportunities for professional employment. Naturally, Walterdale will not be getting into the talent
“employment” business as an amateur theatre and can only rely on using such people when they are “resting” or feel that they would like to do something at the theatre and “employment” isn’t a consideration.

Walterdale found itself forced to redefine its place and its relevancy, not only publicly but also within the ranks of its own newsletter-reading members. It remained committed to filling gaps that the alternative could not, whatever these emerging gaps may have been. During the 1970s, it went from being one of three continually producing theatres in the city to one of nine. As local theatre practitioners began finding professional work at alternative “experimental” theatres in the city, Walterdale would need to concentrate on its other niches as well.

Indeed, in the early 1970s there must have been a feeling among some Edmontonians that as professionalization increased, Walterdale had spent its catalytic value to the city. In April 1972, the City of Edmonton conferred the Creative and Performing Arts Award upon Walterdale (the first time an organization and not an individual received the honour). In his presentation speech Thomas Peacocke, then head of the University of Alberta’s Drama Department, lauded Walterdale for its work, which he called “amateur in fact [but] professional in spirit and attitude […] command[ing] the respect of its audiences and the attention of the national press [while] embrac[ing] all age groups and professions in its membership [yet never receiving] civic, provincial or federal aid.”

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103 In a subsequent letter to the City of Edmonton, Jack Wilson described the award:

This award is to suitably recognize individuals or groups who gain national or international acceptance for outstanding achievement in one or more of the arts, where discipline, skill, and training are required to attain this recognition by a qualified board of adjudicators or judges.

By foregrounding the “discipline, skill, and training” as requisites for the award, Wilson underlined key disciplinary traits of his nonprofessionalized theatre company.
Walterdale’s president Jack Wilson used the award to gain further cultural capital for the company in a lease renewal request to the city. In so doing, he re-articulated Walterdale’s changing place in Edmonton’s cultural fabric:

Walterdale Theatre Associates is the only community amateur theatre available to the citizens of Edmonton who wish to participate in theatrical activities. The term “amateur” is used solely to signify that its members give of their time and talent on an absolute gratis basis. Personal development and satisfaction in achieving high standards of theatre are the reward. However, their public following will readily attest to the professional [quality] of the productions. (Wilson letter to City)

The letter went on to petition the city for an expansion of Walterdale’s lease on the basis that, “[Walterdale’s members] over the years have contributed to establishing Edmonton as one of the vital theatre centres in Canada. We have reached an important plateau in our history.” A lease renewal ought to be granted for Walterdale “To continue to satisfy the increasing demands made on our resources by a membership drawn from all professions and walks of life” (Wilson letter to City).

The founding of so many companies after so few was indicative of not only local, but also North American culture. In 1971, at the end of his first year as Walterdale’s president, Wilson reported the developing situation to Walterdale’s membership in this way: “Your organization is meeting strong competition for the entertainment dollar. More and more leisure-time activities are being offered to the public. The theatre-goer in particular now has a widening choice of productions. Legitimate theatre is well-represented in the City.” Wilson must have been referring to the Citadel and Theatre 3, but he went on to list the Edmonton Symphony Society (1952- ), the Edmonton Professional Opera Association (1963- , now Edmonton Opera), sporting activities and nightclubs as well as the Jubilee Auditorium’s “increasing number of
‘events’” as drawing on audiences’ “entertainment” expenditures. To ensure returning patrons, he urged Walterdale to

mount the type of play that has good audience response [and is produced] on as high a level as is possible […] so that the “end-product” is as professionally mounted as it can be.[…] In effect we are promoting a season of plays and activities which closely matches most professional groups on this continent, and yet is still being handled by amateurs on a part-time basis. (emphasis in original)

To continue to do so, Wilson proposed “that after due and careful consideration” Walterdale should hire either a full-time or a part-time business manager to

permit for orderly development and progress of the organization, which, without doubt, should be methodically pursued. [The membership’s] collective time, talent and energy could [thus] be properly utilized and channeled.[…] It would be some guarantee for the continued existence of Walterdale [if ratified by the membership].” (Wilson President’s)

On the point of administrative expansion, feelings were mixed. Though the idea of hiring a paid business manager would be revisited in the decades to come, Walterdale did not do so until it hired an administrator in 2006.104 But there was no question that Wilson’s wider vision of an amateur theatre operating as if professionally was shared by the majority of members. With local talent it was possible to offer high caliber productions even while adhering to participatory policies in a climate of diversified entertainment.

Space to Professionalize

The pressures of professionalization were hardly limited to internal talent or external associations. Wilson’s articulation of an amateur company approaching its production activity as if professionally quickly grew from a visionary suggestion to an institutional necessity. When

104 For example, Walterdale’s February 1982 think tank meeting raised the possibility of hiring a “paid manager” (Bosley letter to Walterdale).
Walterdale moved into its present firehall location in the fall of 1974 it acquired an enviable long-term theatre space under the terms of a twenty-year lease from the city (later extended for two more decades). The lease stipulated rent at $1.00 per year plus tax. Any necessary renovations were the financial responsibility of Walterdale and had to be accomplished within historically accurate code. Its three successive moves—from the run-down schoolhouse to the legion hall and then to the firehall—had incrementally increased its cultural capital. By inhabiting a recognizable historical site and renovating it into a respectable and, significantly, publicly accessible landmark, the group had acquired an aura of competence, prestige and permanence.

As with Alumnae when it moved into its firehall, the conditions with which Walterdale dealt when it moved were complicated, but by no means unique. The need for a physical location sets theatre apart from other artistic practices. If a company intends to produce repeatedly and predictably, important for defining, building and maintaining audiences, the traditional impulse is to secure a space that will become familiar to returning audiences, a home-base approach to cultural production. This impulse morphed into a sort of replicated administrative fixation in Canada, as reflected in John Juliani’s oft-repeated accusation that Canada was preoccupied with an “edifice complex,”¹⁰⁵ which Michael McKinnie notes was not isolated to the federally supported regional theatre network but was pervasive among Toronto’s, and we might fairly postulate many of Canada’s, alternative theatres at the time (20, 74). McKinnie argues, with emphasis on regional theatres, that, “performance space was coded in late 1960s Canada as the architectural expression of artistic ossification and social privilege” (75). But in Walterdale’s

¹⁰⁵ The term “edifice complex” apparently dates back to a remark made by theatre critic George Jean Nathan about the Madison Avenue mansion that became the headquarters for Random House, printed in the *New York Times* (11 Aug 1946, 130). It subsequently entered into the lexicon of popular culture.
case, obtaining from the city the historic firehall was a sign of municipal commitment to participatory arts-based community development as much as permanence and social standing. Participatory community development was decidedly in contrast to the municipal, provincial and federal approval of the Citadel and other regionals, with their emphasis on socialite prestige and institutionalized outposts. Because the vintage 1910 Walterdale firehall is, like Alumnae’s visually arresting, its white flag-topped bell-tower visible for nearly a kilometer above the low building heights of the historic Strathcona district, it possesses a physical prominence over the commercial and residential buildings that surround it. Because it is located in a high pedestrian (low vehicle) traffic area, particularly on Saturdays when the adjacent farmers market ritualistically attracts thousands, the firehall is visually familiar to a large number of Edmontonians. And because the long-term lease gave the company a “monopoly claim over the use of a particular space” (79), Walterdale could adopt the (restored) historical importance of the firehall as its own. Just as McKinnie says in his discussion of Toronto’s Theatre Passe Muraille and its acquisition of a former warehouse location on Ryerson Avenue, Walterdale’s firehall “became a spatial commemoration of the company’s own history” (87). This “ideology of permanence” (83) allows Walterdale, like Alumnae, to use the space to enter into a dialogue of timelessness with its heritage building, and more widely the historicized discourse of theatre practice itself. The two-decade long lease provided the promise of predictability and permanence (or as close as one can get without outright ownership), which sets it apart from some of Edmonton’s professional alternative theatres that emerged during the same decade. And because

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106 The firehall had served for twenty years as a storage facility for Strathcona Furniture before Walterdale beat out a bid by the South Edmonton Businessman’s Association, which intended to convert the building into “a restaurant with meeting rooms on the first floor.” But as Walterdale’s bid acquired the support of the Strathcona Historical Group, and gained some leverage with the city by arguing that Edmonton had benefited greatly from Walterdale Melodrama publicity (Woolner “Fire”), the city eventually favoured Walterdale’s bid.
the labour for renovating the deteriorating building in 1974 was provided in large part by Walterdale’s active volunteer members in the months leading up to the November 1975 premiere of Orton’s *What the Butler Saw*, the amateur group was able to incorporate its constitutive “day job” professional skills into the building, thus contributing to the group’s ubiquitous participatory ethos.

Walterdale acquired the firehall toward the end of the regional theatre institutionalization boom, but in many ways its physical plant transformation was different from that of the regionals. For one, it encountered new building management problems that its professional regional counterparts did not. Its lease with the city stipulated that it was responsible for all maintenance and renovation costs. But who would maintain the building? Who would do so as a volunteer? Months before the move, Graves, as membership chairman, warned of “culture shock” because members had thus far focused primarily on play programming, not building management. He even went so far as to suggest they should consider themselves to be operating a “community cultural centre with Walterdale Theatre Associates as its prime tenant” (letter c.1975). This grand view was not received well by other Walterdale stalwarts, and Graves later admitted to Alberta’s Minister of Culture, Horst Schmidt (in a letter thanking him for his support)

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107 I plot the regional theatre boom over twenty years, from the founding of MTC in 1958 to the full professionalization of London’s Grand Theatre in 1978. Thus: MTC (1958- ), Vancouver Playhouse (1962- ), Neptune Theatre (Halifax, 1963- ), Citadel Theatre (1965- ), Theatre New Brunswick (Fredricton, 1968- ), Theatre Calgary (1968- ), Centaur Theatre (Montréal, 1969- ), Globe Theatre (Regina, professionalized as adult theatre 1970- ), Théâtre du Trident (Québec City, 1970- ), CentreStage (formerly Toronto Arts Productions at the St. Lawrence Centre in Toronto, 1970-88), Sudbury Theatre Centre (1971- ), Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (Montréal, became dedicated regional in 1972- ), Theatre Aquarius (Hamilton, 1973- ), Belfry Theatre (Victoria, 1974- ), Persephone Theatre (Saskatoon, 1974- ), the Grand Theatre (London, professionalized 1978- ) and Rising Tide Theatre (Trinity, Newfoundland and Labrador, 1978- ). The National Arts Centre’s English theatre (Ottawa, 1969- ) frequently operates as if it were a regional, presenting similar programming to, and pursuing co-productions with, the regional theatres.
in acquiring the firehall), that “my gloom lay in my belief that we could not handle another
relocation” (letter 1976). Walterdale did handle it and Graves went on to say that he thought
support for the move from both the city and the province “may prove historically significant as a
mark of the turning tide in land utilization. [W]e trust that we will provide adequate return on its
social investment.”

Still, questions about running the facility remained. As Graves put it in the months
following the move, “There are plenty of new ‘amateurs’ that can be encouraged along to
theatre, but they are not of the same breed as in the old days. Most of them want to act and
building, painting, sweeping and tidying up the john is not something they want to get into”
(“Possibly,” emphasis in original). Whereas plays might be acted and directed by unpaid artists,
the degree to which a committee of volunteers would (or could) manage an historic building
quickly proved to be a priority issue. Could a building manager be the only paid member of an
otherwise volunteer company of members, many of them very active, numbering in the
hundreds? What would this mean for the group’s “society” designation? And how would these
questions (and their answers) influence the company’s strongly cherished nonprofessionalized
status?

In the spring of 1976, addressing Walterdale’s annual general meeting as membership
chairman and incoming vice president, Graves put the problem in this way:

Walterdale is in no position to compete with professional theatre.[…] Our task is
to provide the context within which the amateur can undertake the theatrical
experience. However, I would like to point out that the way the world works
today—with leisure activity becoming a professional industry—the amateur and
leisure activity has to be professionally managed. (my emphasis)

108 One month after Graves (as Walterdale’s vice president) wrote to Schmidt, Schmidt officially
announced Walterdale Playhouse (Firehall No. 6) as a Registered Historic Site due to its
“historical and architectural significance” (Alberta “Old”).
Graves’s point was central. He was making the distinction between “professional” as it referred to employment and “professional” as it referred to attitude; the two in practice are distinct. As a nonprofessionalized company, Walterdale had straddled the fields of artistic and leisure practice for nearly two decades, but the practices themselves had professionalized beneath it. As he stated in the newsletter a few months later, “The task facing [the executive] is a tough one. The amateur has almost disappeared from today’s society, particularly in the City environment, and the competition for competent people is fierce.” Walterdale members were being strained, along with the reputations of many in the process. Amateur activity, once viewed as a noble pursuit that “ministers to [one’s] life” (Perry 4) was increasingly viewed as ballast dragging down the country’s professionalizing and nationalizing agenda. The rest of the field was now redefining it. Nevertheless, Graves sought to encourage his fellow members to define amateur practice from within.

In his membership address that year, Graves went on to list four points for Walterdale members to consider: what to expect from building managers, the degree to which creative teams should adopt more “educational” roles during rehearsals, consideration of potential rental income to increase both box office sales and “community involvement” and the question of whether membership should be redefined to exclude nonparticipants. This last question must have seemed somewhat chastising to those members who supported the theatre solely by their membership fees and ticket purchases, instead of by participating in productions. But these were policy points Graves had thought much about. During the previous ten years he had not only made a name for himself as an actor and playwright at Walterdale, he had recently drawn on his time as clerk at the Provincial Legislature when acting as a principle lease/venue negotiator with the city in acquiring the firehall for Walterdale. He helped Walterdale get the building they
wanted but the reality had sunk in since it opened a year and a half earlier, “now that we are,” Graves explained with familiar wit, “affluent fat cats with a lovely theatre to work in” (Walterdale Newsletter Aug 1976).

Stepping Stones

But Graves was an implicated party. From the time Walterdale premiered his Edmonton Journal-award-winning one-act plays Yes, Dear and Love in a Greenhouse (March and November 1968, respectively) and his first melodrama The Mumberley Inheritance (July 1971), Graves’s star was on the rise. As Gordon Peacock put it in 1971, Graves was something of a “playwright-in-residence” at Walterdale (“Edmonton” 62). His acting earned him critical accolades: he was “an incredible star,” “a Walterdale stalwart who here is clearly in another league” (Ashwell “Laughs”), an actor who “gives a truly masterful performance” and “a sheer delight!” (Woolner “2 Hours”). His directing was lauded for reflecting his “penchant for dry wit and his professional approach to amateur theatre” (Gillese “Relatively”). And as a forthright administrator, Graves served as Walterdale’s artistic director (1970-72), membership chairman (1973-76) and vice-president (1976-77). From 1973 to 1975 he was the company’s animated, and at times controversial, newsletter writer. During the early 1970s he led the committee that was instrumental in securing Walterdale’s current location at the firehall.

Considering Graves’s varied artistic and administrative capacities at Walterdale, and his growing public image in theatre and local television during the 1970s, his prodding must have seemed to some a strategy aimed at pushing Walterdale toward professionalization. The question

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109 Some of the following biographical material on Graves appears in Hot Thespian Action! (Whittaker 38-40) and my entry on Graves in the Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia online.
of amateur and professional values was a hot button topic for artists and cultural administrators across the country, particularly during the 1970s as Canadian actors began to join AEA and then the CAEA. Indeed, a number of Walterdale’s members were themselves moving into the profession. In some cases they left Edmonton for more steady work, but others stayed. Members such as Hutch Shandro, Kenneth Welsh, Bob Mumford, Karen Austin, Susan McFarlane, Larry Hertzog, Leroy Schultz, Phillip Silver, Phil Switzer, Micky Macdonald and Wally McSween moved on to professional work by 1980 (Rivet 24). And in the decades that followed other members turned professional too, including those listed in this study’s introduction.

Graves repeatedly stated to members that Walterdale needed to contend with Edmonton’s burgeoning professional era. But his philosophical musings were taking on increasing weight as he was elected to positions of influence there, and as he accumulated professional writing and acting credits. Echoing Wilson’s earlier pronouncements, Graves began pushing for Walterdale to “get more and more into the business of professionalism providing a context within which amateurs may enjoy the experiences and delights of amateur theatre.” Two of his own summer Walterdale melodramas had been runaway hits as part of Edmonton’s Klondike Days Festival, and there was talk of his now internationally produced The Mumberley Inheritance being produced again for the event, with Graves as director. But this time he wanted appropriate compensation in two capacities, playwright and director, which contravened Walterdale’s policy for paying practising members. A special executive meeting was held 20 January 1977 to discuss the next melodrama. Graves seconded a motion to “look for an amateur director” but this was

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In his “Nightside” column on 29 Oct 1966, Barry Westgate reported that McSween “set out for the coast a couple of months ago to try his hand at the professional theatre game.[… ] Wally had a part in the network show People In Conflict, which originates in Vancouver, and I hope that means he’s going to be used regularly. He’s good enough. It just takes a few breaks, and who in the theatre here ever worked as honestly at it.”
defeated. Instead, in three successive motions the board voted to “hire a director,” pay this
director “a flat rate of $1000 plus 7% of the net profit of $7000” and to “offer this job to Warren
Graves.” Graves accepted (WEMM 20 Jan 1977), thus joining Marjorie Knowler (What the
Butler Saw, Nov 1974),111 Kenneth Dyba (Bus Stop, March 1970)112 and later Carl Hare (The
Winter’s Tale, Oct 1983) as one of the few directors at Walterdale to be paid as a director.
Paying Graves from Walterdale’s own funds must have seemed a controversial step toward
professionalization as he, unlike the other three, continued to be a Walterdale member and did
not purport, overtly anyways, to be engaged in an educational capacity as did Dyba and Hare.113

Graves’s “employment” as a director for the important summer melodrama set off an
“exercise” (Graves’s word) that led to his resignation as vice president that March and his
departure from active participation at Walterdale. In his resignation letter, typed under his
freelance letterhead, Graves reiterated his point that “Leisure activity is now big business and the
theatrical scene in Edmonton has changed beyond all recognition over the last two years.” Others
would have deserved being paid to direct the summer melodrama too, he assured president Len
Crowther, but he concluded “I sincerely hope that the members of the Executive accept that I
must fight to maintain my ‘professional’ status these days as I accept that Walterdale wishes to

111 Knowler had been a founding member of Walterdale, but had since moved to Vancouver to
pursue a successful professional career. Her return to Edmonton—where, as Graves put it at the
time, she “is well loved in this city, has a solid reputation in Edmonton theatre” (Graves Sept
1974)—to direct What the Butler Saw was symbolic.
112 Dyba was director of Calgary’s MAC 14 during the two years before it became Theatre
Calgary under Christopher Newton. In a letter written to president John Rivet several weeks
before rehearsals began for Bus Stop, Dyba included the postscript, “I’m concerned about
involving as many people as possible in this project, John. Especially younger people who will—
hopefully!—go on to make a genuine contribution—amateur and/or professional—to the theatre
in Canada” (Dyba).
113 Unlike Graves, Knowler, Dyba and Hare were paid from one-time external grants, for
example from Theatre Canada. The latter two were, in part, considered leaders of show-related
professional workshops.
maintain its ‘amateur’ status. What we have been through is precisely this debate, it had to happen” (letter to Crowther). Crowther’s response remains one of Walterdale’s best-articulated position-takings. After thanking Graves for directing Ritters’s *The Girl I Left Behind Me* for Walterdale’s Night of One-Act Plays that March, and praising his high standards in that regard, Crowther accepted Graves’s resignation with understanding and acknowledged his contribution to “the success of Walterdale” over the years:

> I think it is proper that you move into the professional sphere now. Hopefully Walterdale can find another Warren Graves who is looking for a proving grounds for his talents.

> Walterdale has chosen to remain amateur and foster theatre in that sphere. Personally I do not think Edmonton needs another professional theatre. Walterdale can do more for professional theatre ultimately by giving people an opportunity to try theatre in capacities they could not dare to hope for in the professional theatre. (letter to Graves)

With his response, Crowther carved Walterdale’s niche as operating outside of the profession’s disciplinary strictures (as much as possible) in order to protect its members’ capacity to produce plays. This was good for Walterdale and good for the profession. He articulated the theatre’s view that it operated not on behalf of the needs of an association of professional artists, but on behalf of the needs of its city and interested nonprofessionals. In his estimation this position would, in fact, best serve the profession and aspiring professional artists, like Graves, by providing non-conservatory practical experience in the community.¹¹⁴

The Graves-Crowther discussion—partly a matter of Graves’s personal career, partly a matter of Walterdale’s internal administrative policies and partly a matter of Walterdale’s public image—re-situated the artist and the company within Edmonton’s field of theatre production. In

¹¹⁴ As epilogue to Graves’s active involvement with Walterdale, the April 1977 *Walterdale Newsletter* reported that “Since the last newsletter Warren Graves has resigned his responsibilities in Walterdale Theatre to pursue his professional career as a writer, director and actor. We will miss his skill and wit as newsletter editor. All of us at Walterdale wish Warren continued success and thank him for his many contributions.”
terms of Walterdale’s internal policy and external image, the discussion reaffirmed the company as actively nonprofessionalized. For Graves, it brought focus to an individual’s “social trajectory,” or “the set of successive movements of an agent in a structured (hierarchized) space [which] may imply a change of sector and the reconversion of one kind of capital into another” (Bourdieu “Field” 276fn44). Though Bourdieu normally uses “social trajectory” to explain how artists and their works experience “social ageing” (whereby what was once new and avant-garde becomes outmoded and orthodox), it can also be used to explain an artist’s career moves from nonprofessionalized to paraprofessional to devoutly professional. Graves’s trajectory necessitated a hard split away from nonprofessionalized forms of theatre in order to operate as a career, association-affiliated theatre professional. It also necessitated an exchange of certain symbolic social capital (as a high-profile “Walterdale stalwart” and “an incredible star” within the company) for the possibility of economic capital (Equity-rate income) and other social capital (professionalized prestige). Indeed, Graves’s newsletter and correspondence can be read as utterances that are constitutive of a broader, nationwide negotiation of the meanings and effects of social trajectory, explicitly Walterdale’s but implicitly Graves’s own, in a professionalizing culture.

As a theatre dedicated to nonprofessionalized practice, Walterdale navigated a difficult decade of professionalization during the 1970s. Above all, the company took as priority the professionalism of its operations, even as it refused to professionalize its practices. On this point it is telling to note that between the executive’s special meeting on the melodrama and Graves’s resignation (a period of about three months), Crowther drafted an open recommendation letter for Graves on Walterdale letterhead that ended, “Warren is a ‘professional’ and an asset to any theatre company” (letter to “Dear Sir”). In all, Crowther took an active and aware position while
weathering a critical storm among the company’s membership. However, though Walterdale and Graves had resolved their relationship in a manner agreeable to both parties, the matter of Walterdale’s ongoing dealings with the country’s burgeoning profession was by no means concluded.

**Actors**

There still lay about the prickly matter of concessions. According to Dolgoy, Equity’s Canadian executive prior to the 1970s adopted a policy of granting show-specific concessions to its commercially based contracts, as a means to nurture the [professional theatre] community. While the policy did foster the [professional theatre] community’s growth, CAEA [in later years] found that the policy perpetuated what it saw as amateur business practices. (Dolgoy 171)

In the early 1970s, Equity’s Canadian executive moved away from its “culture of concessions” (174) and increased enforcement of actors’ minimum pay. It was an attempt by Equity to prevent “illegal exercise of the profession” (Bourdieu “Field” 274fn15), but it adversely affected a variety of theatres, both amateur and professional.¹¹⁵ For example, Denis W. Johnston explains in *Up the Mainstream* that Equity’s Canadian executive imposed sanctions on Toronto’s Factory Theatre Lab in 1972 when Factory refused to pay actors the weekly Equity minimum, which in

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¹¹⁵ Before the First Canadian Theatre Agreement in 1974, Equity negotiated contracts with each theatre directly, instead of through the Association of Canadian Theatres (later PACT). Dolgoy explains that since the Canadian office of AEA opened in 1955, contracts and rate changes were practiced “under the banner” of the document *Equity Reserves The Right to Determine The Type And Classification Of Any Company And The Type(s) Of Contract To Be Used By That Company* (1970). Dolgoy cites Vernon Chapman’s unpublished history of Equity in which Chapman says that workplace regulation stemmed from what Dolgoy calls “a panoply of American-based rulebooks” (Chapman 16-19, cited in Dolgoy 125). Says Dolgoy, the First Canadian Theatre Agreement “was less than complete” because of these circumstances, and because the League of Canadian Theatres (LOCT) was not yet a “legally constituted organization” (125).
turn led to Canada Manpower stopping Factory’s administrative salaries via their $40,000 Local Initiative Project (LIP) grant on the grounds that the company was violating collective agreements (95-97). Johnston’s comment that “Equity regulations, devised for American stock and Canadian regional theatres, were often inappropriate to the very different conditions in the new small theatres in Toronto” (95) might be applied to a range of Canadian theatres at the time, including amateur theatres.

In fact, not all professional regionals were pleased with the emerging state of affairs either. In 1970, as the Equity’s Canadian executive granted fewer and fewer concessions, Ken Kramer, founding artistic director of Regina’s Globe Theatre (1966-), scolded them for “killing the Theatre financially,” in large part by “forcing him to hire a stage manger which he did not need and could not afford” (Kramer himself stage managed his company’s shows, even those he directed), for not “visiting a theatre and understanding their individual problems” and even responding with “rudeness and incompetence” (in Dolgoy 89). Both instances of dissent point to a considerable difficulty of professionalization, that of members protecting against generalizations that impinge on their unique circumstances. Former Equity Canadian executive chair Vernon Chapman relates in his unpublished history of CAEA that in 1975, just prior to the official formation of the CAEA, “some members felt apprehension that increased regionalism would be divisive of the Canadian Equity that was yet to be” (Chapman 8, qtd in Dolgoy 137).

When Canadian Equity members split from AEA in 1976, the new CAEA began to require letters of permission for non-PACT theatres to engage its members. When it negotiated the Second Canadian Theatre Agreement in 1977, the introduction of a “fully standardized

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116 Here Dolgoy cites the Minutes of a Meeting of Managers of Producing Theatre Companies November 21st and 22nd, 1970, Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg.
contract” meant there was now “little room for concession” (Dolgoy 21). This included amateur theatres. Without a concrete policy of its own, Walterdale made requests to Equity on a situation-by-situation basis to cast without pay those Walterdale members who had also become Equity members. As Rivet put it, “By 1977, professional theatre in Edmonton was flourishing. Many Walterdale members had the best of both worlds. They worked professionally whenever possible; or expanded their talents and experience in more challenging and demanding roles at Walterdale” (Rivet 22).

Thus, to increase the likelihood that it could maintain the standards of its productions, when in one instance Walterdale needed to replace an actor “who had to drop out of the rehearsals” it asked permission to use a local Equity member for “no remuneration.” The response from Equity was that the $25 fee must be paid to the Equity member through Equity (Sloan letter to Chadwick, Marston). Walterdale’s executive again deemed the paying of some members but not others to be unfair and untenable; but by refusing to cast Equity members in its shows, Walterdale would lose a number of committed practising members.

It quickly became apparent that Walterdale would need to generate a clearer policy regarding its relationship with professional associations if it were to circumvent potentially awkward (for both itself and its participant artists) disputes. Crowther, as president, met with the chairman of Equity’s Alberta Advisory Committee. On 11 April 1978, following a series of meetings, local and national, Equity informed Walterdale that, “after a number of years of special exceptions” it could “no longer make an exception on behalf of Walterdale and permit

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117 As Dolgoy notes, referring to professionalized theatre practices under PACT and CAEA regulations, currently in 2007 “the CTA, through its regulation of the wages and conditions of work for most Canadian directors, choreographers, actors, stage managers and fight directors, is central to the business model of English Canadian not-for-profit theatre” (147). Its “55 rules,” he emphasizes, “contain many subsections that provide protection for artists, in a business where change and innovation are a constant” (147).
Equity members to rehearse and perform with Walterdale” unless under a “Guest Artist Agreement” contract. Because many Edmonton theatre artists, now Equity members, were close to Walterdale at the time, Equity’s ruling must have been difficult not only for Walterdale’s casting prospects, but also for those recently-admitted Equity members who were active Walterdale members. For many it was not a black-and-white issue of “Amateur vs. Equity” (Rivet 23) or volunteer versus professional disciplinary growth. Embedded in the issue was the question: Were there yet enough professional theatres in Edmonton offering sustained opportunities to Equity actors to offer a career, or even enough desirable short-term opportunities?

Shortly following his discussions with CAEA, Crowther made his final report as president at Walterdale’s 1978 annual general meeting. Though he expressed regret at the talent lost to Walterdale, he once again took a firm stand on the principles of nonprofessionalized practice at Walterdale:

[W]e will not have some of our members participating because of a decision by Actors Equity that would require us to pay Equity members appearing on our stage. This we cannot do. I personally think it would be the end of Walterdale as a community theatre, if anyone wants to be paid anything. However, I would be more apprehensive about its survival if it decided to become professional and pay for all the services that have been so freely given in the past. The basis of amateur theatre is, that everyone is on an equal footing. The commitment made by the director is on the same basis as the commitment made by the leads and the stage crew and the builders. (Crowther “President’s”)

Crowther again defined the place of amateur practice at Walterdale. And like Walterdale’s earlier statement about informing auditioners that if cast, they cannot be paid, Crowther’s statement emphasized equality as a guiding principle amongst its practitioners.

The conflict went public. In an article that referred to Walterdale as “the amateur theatre that has in so many ways been the catalyst in the development of professional theatre in
Edmonton,” *Edmonton Journal* theatre critic Keith Ashwell announced Ron Wigmore as Walterdale’s new president (Crowther had concluded his two-year term). As an active Walterdale member, and having served ten years earlier as Walterdale’s artistic director, Wigmore was known for his candor. The article on Walterdale’s “critical crossroads” featured Wigmore’s forthright comments: “Having had serious misgivings about whether Walterdale clearly understood its role in the community and what its mandate is, it was put up or shut up time.[…] Equity has been […] the straw that broke the camel’s back of indecision. We have to decide where we’re going. Are we going to pay? Are we going back to our roots?” And it concluded with Wigmore stating, “if we don’t open our 1978-79 season until December because of our decision to re-examine ourselves, so be it.”118 As his “first official act” Wigmore called an all-day members “think tank” to redefine Walterdale’s “objects [sic] and its capabilities” following Equity’s ruling (*Walterdale Newsletter* 1 June 1978).119

**“Leisure Time,” Lacunae and the Law**

As president, Wigmore’s first contact with Equity was to acknowledge Walterdale’s position toward Equity actors, and to ask their position toward directors. Some Equity actors wanted to direct at Walterdale. The July 1978 executive meeting generated “unanimous agreement” that Wigmore should discuss with Equity a release from the Guest Artist agreement for “certain people (interested in directing this next season with Walterdale)” (WEMM 15 July 1978).

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118 This threat must have shocked some Edmontonians as Walterdale had never failed to produce a fall play in each of its twenty seasons, and had produced full seasons since 1960.  
119 Special consideration, Ashwell relayed, would be made for the melodrama, produced by Walterdale at the Citadel each summer, which by then accounted for fifty per cent of Walterdale’s season revenue. For more on the Walterdale Klondike Days Melodrama, see *Hot Thespian Action!* (Whittaker 36-41).
1978). Wigmore took two actions. First, he wrote to Equity to discover whether Equity members who were acknowledged as actors but had no directing experience might be allowed to direct without payment under “a workable and acceptable apprenticeship designation” (Wigmore letter to Chadwick); and second, he contacted Walterdale’s law firm, on behalf of Walterdale and its Equity-affiliated members, for a legal view on the matter.

Equity again refused permission for any member, including would-be directors, to work at Walterdale without payment (Chadwick letter to Wigmore); but Walterdale’s lawyers advised otherwise. At the end of August 1978, Walterdale’s law firm (themselves working gratis) informed Wigmore that having reviewed Equity’s agreement, Bylaws and a 1966 “information pamphlet” they had drawn a set of opinions. Though Equity set a minimum payment for employment, this did not preclude a situation “where a member receives no payment at all” (emphasis in original); a person under common-law has “liberty to do what he likes with his own leisure time [so Equity’s Bylaws] would therefore be unenforceable” and would likely be viewed as such in the courts as a “conspiracy in restraint of trade”; and “Equity members must clearly realize that nothing prevents them from continuing to support Walterdale by donating their skills” (Ogilvie & Company letter to Wigmore). Walterdale’s lawyers thus took clear exception to the position Equity had taken in the past few years toward its members’ unpaid participation. If Equity viewed the field as comprised of clear-cut distinctions between professional and nonprofessionalized theatre practices, it seemed the law might not. Could Equity enforce the “leisure time” activities of its members?

On the other hand, the lawyers’ document also noted the potential “practical caveats” involved with supporting Equity members who chose to contravene their professional associations’ Bylaws. In order to do so, the document stated, a “test case” actor “must be
prepared to sacrifice his or her acting career, or at least to endure a substantial interruption of it.”

An actor risked his or her own reputation by taking any legal action, and this would almost certainly be regardless of a favourable legal outcome. Risking local actors’ reputations was decidedly not in line with Walterdale’s intentions. Both Equity’s response and the lawyers’ letter were reported in turn to eighteen Walterdale members present at the October 1978 board meeting (WEMM 25 Oct 1978). There was now an articulated lacuna in the discourse—between the constitutive elements of Walterdale and Equity—that in effect favoured no one. The professionalization of a heretofore-participatory theatre practice had found its discontents.

Already, the members’ June “think tank”\textsuperscript{120} had resoundingly concluded that Walterdale would not pay actors, directors or backstage workers: “The Playhouse should retain its amateur

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\textsuperscript{120} Ron Wigmore announced the “think-tank” meeting in the 25 June 1978 Newsletter:

I have decided that it is absolutely crucial that we examine in some detail why Walterdale Theatre Associates exists, what our mandate in the community should be, and what our goals and objectives are. The need to do this has been voiced by many of our members for a number of years now, and it is essential that we fully address the question. No organization, whatever its composition, can continue to adequately function without a periodic examination of its reason for existing.

The meeting was open to “anyone, member or non-member” (emphasis in original) and a detailed programme followed, indicating that the morning would be devoted to discussion limited to the subject of “Purpose, Goals, and Objectives” for Walterdale “in today’s Edmonton theatre environment”; the afternoon specified three groups, each discussing either Programming, Administration or Production, and subsequently reporting their findings. He hoped “This day should be exciting, stimulating and rewarding.”

The think-tank’s findings were thorough, with the newsletter reporting about eighty people in attendance and Rivet saying “The turnout, rather than the rumoured ‘few old guard,’ was a happy surprise—a sizeable cross-section of interests and motives. They represented the audience (past and present), actors, actresses and technicians (both amateur and professional)” (23). All three morning groups reportedly agreed that Walterdale should remain amateur and work to high standards; its strengths lay in education and providing experience; and emphasis should be placed on encouraging participation in the company (one group phrased this as “Need to aggressively seek true amateurs”). The task-specific afternoon groups agreed the executive must add more elected members to the board, clarify job titles and maintain a “variety of styles and types of plays to challenge our actors and entertain our audiences. / No styles should be considered out of bounds [and] “The quality of scripts should be the prime consideration in
status, as it provides, in this way, both a training-ground for new people who wish to donate their
time and work. This decision in no way should mean any lowering of Walterdale’s standards”
(Walterdale Newsletter Aug 1978). Moreover, younger Walterdale members relied on the
company for opportunities to “learn and develop their talents. If Walterdale were to turn
Professional, or even Semi-professional, new faces would be deprived of such opportunities”
(Rivet 23).

The decision fell well in line with the view held by one influential long-time Walterdale
member. In absentia from the think tank, and writing in partial reference to Ashwell’s earlier
interview with Wigmore, former president Jack Wilson provided steady advice. “Walterdale
Theatre’s function is to provide and promote the best quality amateur theatre it can mount.” He
went on to address the particular circumstances:

Equity’s problem with its members not being allowed to perform at Walterdale is
regrettable for those Walterdale members who also hold memberships in Equity. These people have my sympathy as they will be the losers. They will miss the
chance of playing many fine major roles, which most likely would never come
their way on the professional stage. However, this misguided decision has been
taken by the Equity membership and executive, and thus it is their problem not
Walterdale’s. Walterdale Theatre will still carry on with the best talent and shows
it can possibly mount, as we have done since our inception. There is still talent to
be developed and found amongst our young people coming from High School,
and with Edmonton’s rapidly expanding population, it must be Walterdale’s job to
attract such interested people into our membership. (letter to Wigmore, emphasis
in original)

Drawing from experience and history, Wilson’s comments were direct. If there had been concern
among members that a professional organization was attempting to discursively bully Walterdale
out of producing theatre, Wilson reminded them they too had an intrinsic place among
Edmonton’s artists and the community.

selection of the season” (Wigmore June 1978; “Think Tank” [report]; Wigmore letter to Eric
Candy; Cottrell).
Two longtime audience members Herman and Elly de Jongh, who claimed to have “seen almost all Walterdale plays” since the group formed, wrote to Wigmore: “I’m glad the Walterdale people have decided to remain an amateur theatre, because this leaves you the freedom to try out something different and to keep aloof from snobbish trends. Besides, Walterdale is now an excellent training ground for budding actors/actresses.” At the end of his first season as president, Wigmore simply stated to members at the annual general meeting, “We were advised by Actors Equity that we may not use their members as directors” (President’s).

Directors

But matters were worsening. In attempting to program the 1981-82 season, incoming artistic director Kieran O’Malley was in a bind. In a letter addressed to “Fellow Members” (probably limited to the executive) he wrote, “prospective directors have declined [to direct at Walterdale] because of the possibility of disciplinary action being taken against them [as Equity members].” Referring to (and copying) past correspondence between Equity and Walterdale, O’Malley said he “firmly believed” that Equity had no jurisdiction over its members wanting to work at Walterdale and, moreover, that Walterdale’s executive “should let Equity members know that we are willing to back them morally, and if necessary, financially, should they wish to [work at Walterdale].” O’Malley went so far as to advocate supporting them “not just in principle but also legally and financially.” This was a strong stance against the professional
association’s disciplinary tactics and their range of influence on nonprofessional segments of the field, which was proving wider than ever.\footnote{Of note, president Vivien Bosley reported to the membership a year later that reviewers had found the 1981-82 season under O’Malley’s artistic direction to be “the kind of season that the professional theatres in town ought to offer!” (letter June 1982).}

If, internally, some took hard-line stances, externally, much care was taken to present the company, on principle and in practice, as accommodating. In public, Bosley and Walterdale’s longtime membership kept things light. It was Walterdale’s twenty-fifth anniversary and they knew that the company’s best sell to Edmonton, and potential members, was that it appealed to anyone willing to show dedication to learning and practising theatre in an enjoyable environment. The business behind it all was the executive’s business. “What spirit animates this special collective?” wrote Nicholls in her article on Walterdale’s twenty-fifth anniversary. “The answer has much to do with the allure of making plays come to life, and something to do with it being ‘family.’” Such platitudes, while making good news bites, were worth greater detail.

Nicholls went on: “Walterdale’s membership roster runs from students and secretaries to dentists, doctors, oil company execs, truck drivers and carpenters, some of them highly trained actors” (Nicholls “Well done”). As had been true nearly a decade earlier when members renovated the firehall, this “wide range of human resources” was useful for set building, treating laryngitis and, in the case of lawyer-members, drawing up new constitutions. The variety of professional backgrounds provided the company with an array of skill-sets not often found with professional theatre practitioners whose professional conservatory training and accumulated years of professional stage experience do not always translate into practical real-world experience. This was ordinary life informing artistic practice. Career professionalism could guide
the nonprofessional theatre’s members, a “refusal to allow pettiness or jealousy to intrude on the theatre community,” as one reporter put it (Silvester).

Perhaps with an understanding of Walterdale’s local situation, Equity continued to show lenience. Over the next five years exceptions were made for Walterdale under Equity’s Waiver Policy. This was true for actors (in O’Casey’s Juno and the Paycock, Nov 1982 and Red Roses for Me, Feb 1984, and in Thomas’s Under Milkwood, Jan 1985) and directors (for Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale, Oct 1983, and for Graves’s Pamela Frankenstein or Adam and Eve Meet Apple II, July 1984). But this left Walterdale susceptible to further Equity policy changes.

In January 1985, following the production of Under Milkwood, artistic director Frank Glenfield notified the executive that “He expects to receive a letter from Equity to discontinue using Equity actors” (WEMM 23 Jan 1985). Midway through the following season (1985-86) Equity cancelled their waiver policy, later stating to the press, “When you join a professional organization, you’re not supposed to work without getting paid…. Why should Chinook (a professional theatre) just across the street have to pay actors when Walterdale doesn’t?” (“Walterdale-Equity”).

Here, Equity’s spokesperson draws on a rhetoric invoking a simplistic comparative position founded on geography: a professional theatre “just across the street” from nonprofessionalized theatre should not be set at a disadvantage. The spatial logic on which the press statement rests underscores the notion that Equity overtly intends to discipline the field of theatre by invoking a logic of proximity to exert power even over nonprofessionalized companies in order to maintain real (and perceived) control of the field. In social space, this is a form of “symbolic violence that goes unperceived as violence” when “power is asserted and exercised […] in its subtest form” (Bourdieu et al Weight 126). In order to promote a perceived
professionalized, nationalized and decentralized “national theatre,” Equity sought to discipline social space by disciplining those in close geographical proximity who are not professionalized.\textsuperscript{122}

The remainder of Walterdale’s season began to unravel. At the January 1986 executive meeting the board learned that Equity refused to grant a waiver when one of its members was asked to replace an actor who had dropped out of rehearsals for the Edmonton premiere of Findlay’s \textit{Can You See Me Yet?} Equity said it had notified Walterdale previously that they had canceled their Waiver Policy, though Walterdale’s executive had not received the notice. Equity called an “extraordinary meeting” on the issue; Walterdale did the same in the event that Equity still refused to waive the fee (WEMM 22 Jan 1986). The waiver was denied and the following day the first of two extraordinary executive meetings was held at Walterdale. Wigmore related to the executive “with great relish” Walterdale’s past dealings with Equity, concluding that due to their “legal counsel (on file)” Equity “hadn’t a leg to stand on.” The board unanimously carried a motion, founded on principle, “that Walterdale Theatre Associates continue its policy that no persons participating in Walterdale activities be paid.” It then carried a motion “that this Executive express a complete vote of confidence in the current Artistic Director,” presumably

\textsuperscript{122} In the spring of 2002, while I was artistic director at Walterdale, I received a call at home from an “Equity Co-op” affiliated with the Varscona Theatre (located across from Walterdale) asking me if I could exchange our forthcoming production of Williams’\textit{s Cat on a Hot Tin Roof} for another play because the professional Co-op, with members who had been looking forward for years to doing the piece, now wanted to do it next season too. We had both been granted permission (ours “amateur,” theirs “professional”) from the same play broker.

Play brokers consider geography a factor in maximizing audiences by actively preventing the same play from being produced in the same season in the same city (let alone across the street). Normally, professional groups can hold the rights for a set number of years before they perform a play and a proposed professional production tends to trump a proposed amateur production (apparently there had been a clerical error on the part of the play broker in granting Walterdale the rights in this case). Nevertheless, \textit{local} instances of professional disciplinary tactics directed at Walterdale have been relatively few in a fairly benevolent theatre environment that views success at one theatre as success for theatre generally (see Criterion).
anticipating problems with their next two shows as well, both scheduled to be directed by Equity members. Artistic director Gaye LePage, the play’s director and the actor in question were then called into the meeting. The actor stated he was a new member of Equity and, like Walterdale, was not aware that Equity had cancelled their waiver policy. He also did not wish to contravene his “union” [sic]. (It is not clear from extant documents at what point the actor contacted Equity for a waiver.) The executive carried a motion “that the Artistic Director be encouraged to do all possible to present the play (Can You See Me Yet?).” They left the decision whether or not to cancel and/or replace the show with LePage, offering their “support” (WEMM 23 Jan 1986). Six of the seven elected executive members met the next day, along with LePage. The director had met with the cast “at length” and decided he could not direct the play under the current circumstances; the actors in turn decided they would not do the play with a new director. LePage thus presented her contingency plan for the time remaining: to present Douglas-Home’s The Kingfisher, directed by Lynn Peggs; a new set would not need to be built (WEMM 24 Jan 1986).

Obviously, the replacement of a season show necessitated public explanation. A press release was immediately sent out. The dispute made the Edmonton Journal five days after LePage made her decision. Then, two days before The Kingfisher closed, a phone call to the Edmonton Sun’s Dave Billington “from an upset member of Walterdale who thought it an outrage that the original play, Can You See Me Yet? had to be cancelled” prompted Billington to write a comment piece on the matter. Billington fashioned himself as reconciler, imagining “a sort of unwritten covenant that [professional and amateur companies] will respect the other’s turf.” He noted it was a matter of conflicting principles and Bylaws, but that “From second-hand access to the facts of the issue, it appears that everyone acted in good faith, and there are no real
bad guys. Equity works hard for its members, most of whom earn annual salaries that are below the official poverty line.” He concluded,

All parties I talked to seemed to want to reach some sort of understanding so that this unfortunate incident is not repeated. One can only hope that this is what transpires, because the use of the occasional professional can only enhance Walterdale’s already excellent record. And even non-paying work is helpful for a player, because nothing rusts faster than the skills of a performer who’s too long between jobs.

Billington’s editorial brings attention to the fact that just as theatre is a publicly performed undertaking, so too is the business management of theatre. Definitions of amateur and professional—legal, monetary, practical and principled—are of public interest. They are not the sole domains of restricted fields of production. Neither Equity’s nor Walterdale’s members had proprietary right over the status of artists. The “ordinary people,” some of whom might be potential audiences, would have their say.

The Equity members slated to direct the next two productions were compelled to quit, having been hired a year earlier with the expectation that Equity waivers would still be a matter of course. Replacements were hurriedly found. Notable of the two replacements, Tom Menczel’s direction of Miller’s *The Crucible* met with “rave” reviews in spite of the circumstances. In her season-end report to the membership, LePage explained the circumstance of the previous six months, noting that “A lot of dedicated actors saw their hard work go for nothing, but like the phoenix rising from the ashes, Walterdale people rallied around and *The Kingfisher* took flight.”

**Funding and Nonprofessionalized Practice: Walterdale Investigates the Field**

In ways similar to Bourdieu’s description of the French state, the Canadian government, through support in the form of accredited educational institutions (high schools, universities,
conservatory training programs) and direct “arms length” funding of cultural institutions and independent artists (Canada Council, provincial arts councils, municipal arts boards), engages in “a process of consecration through which the producers are authorized—in their own eyes as well as in those of all legitimate consumers—as legitimate producers, known and recognized by everyone. Thus the state, rather like the central bank, creates the creators” (Bourdieu “Manet” 251).

In Canada, where not-for-profit professional theatre has a history of dependency—at times nearly entire, at other times minimal—upon government consecration, the ability to secure funding is more than a sign of sound administration but also a sign of conferred public approval. Walterdale, like most long-standing amateur groups in the country, has never received federal funding, relying instead on ticket sales and private donations. The complexity of these decisions may be considered, in part, from the points of view of public policy and the experience of nonprofessionalized theatres themselves.

At the conclusion of his thesis on the development of Canadian theatre institutions, Dolgoy poses an important question for further study: “Did the [Canada Council] policy of directing resources only to professional enterprises give the CAEA, as the first nation-wide professional [theatre] organization, an unfair advantage in the market place?” (175). It is clear that the Canada Council drew its funding line to exclude nonprofessionalized theatres on principle. During the 1960s it set what Frank T. Pasquill termed “a strong trend of increased ‘professionalism’” by increasing funding to identifying and proven professional opera, dance, music and theatre groups (62 to 81 per cent) (21). Provincial and municipal granting rose in lockstep (43 to 57 per cent and 52 to 82 per cent respectively). Conspicuously, “professional”

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123 The Canada Council “consecrated” the work of both artists and scholars until 1977 when it relinquished its authority over scholarly research funding to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.
here excludes groups “aspiring to excellent,” instead preferring those that were already established. Pasquill notes in particular that on the whole the municipal increase destroyed an historic assumption by the Canada Council that amateur activity will be looked after by local governments. Municipal politics are simply too volatile, funds are too scarce, and knowledge of the arts is too limited for most politicians to support any but those sanctioned by Canada Council. (17)

Private sector funding during the 1960s favoured professional groups even more heavily in terms of foundation (65-70 per cent) and corporate (85-90 per cent) support (20).

Moreover, in 1968 the Canada Council expressed “grave concern [over] the level of accumulated deficits [of regional theatres that] in some cases are alarmingly big,” even nearing bankruptcy, and asserted that the cultural sector “must be efficient and must be seen to be efficient,” concluding “The responsibility to prevent such disasters lies heavily on boards of directors” (Annual Report 1967-68 9, 12; qtd in Dolgoy 68, 69). In the years that followed, as the Canada Council began to pressure boards at regional theatres to tighten their purse strings, the same “rapid expansion of professional activity” in Edmonton (i.e. the alternative theatres) was occurring in most other major urban centres in the country. CAEA formed in 1976 in part to accommodate this widespread professionalization (Dolgoy 104), which also created conditions whereby nonprofessionalized practice could be viewed no longer as a valuable cultural investment. With all this professional activity, to what end was nonprofessionalized practice?

By the early 1970s, federal funding options for nonprofessionalized theatre had all but disappeared, save for twice-removed arms-length funding by way of the struggling DDF-residue

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124 At the above-mentioned 1982 panel, former Canada Council theatre officer David Gardner said that in the same year that he “struggled to scrape together” a few thousand dollars for various professional theatres, the Sudbury Little Theatre received $90,000 through the Opportunities for Youth Grants “to mount a single production and they were amateurs. I don’t know what they did with the money! Obviously they paid everybody rather well” (Kilbourn et al 1976). This rests as one important example in which payment is not the sole indicator of professional status.
organization, Theatre Canada (TC). From its inception the Canada Council’s policy had been that “cultural funding would go to the professionals” (David Gardner in Benson and Conolly 309), though the DDF received four per cent of the Canada Council’s $1 million given to the arts in its first year (1957-58) (Dolgoy fn24). In 1960, borrowing from England’s characterization of the “Raise or Spread” dilemma, the Canada Council opted to fund a few organizations well (raise), as opposed to a wide number a little (spread) (Dolgoy 32). When the “responsibility” for TC moved from the Secretary of State to the professional artist purview of the Canada Council, even more blindspots existed regarding the federal government’s position on nonprofessionalized theatre practices. Thus, while Walterdale had received TC money to hire Ken Dyba to direct in 1970, four years later it tried to obtain funding from the Canada Council (Rivet letter to Trott).

The response was clear:

Because we have a requirement that theatres be fully professional before they come to us for assistance, Walterdale would not qualify for any help.[…] In fact Council in the past has given assistance to Theatre Canada so that they in turn can provide the kind of service which you are looking for. I would continue to press Theatre Canada to consider your application for professional assistance, and I hope that you will be successful (although I know that their budget for this activity is finite!). (Trott)

Concurrently, TC agreed to consider Walterdale’s professional guest director request, though the wheels of summer bureaucracy were moving slowly.

In an effort to address the place and value of public funding for Canada’s amateur theatres, the Canada Council convened a nationwide meeting at its Ottawa headquarters in April 1975 to discuss the needs of the nation’s community theatres. Walterdale’s president John Rivet accepted a paid invitation to attend as a community theatre representative from Alberta. It was clear from the planned discussion points mailed out in advance to invitees that the Canada Council was considering downloading TC’s responsibilities to the provinces, including its
professional assistance program, the national festival and “information services.” TC had contacted Walterdale five years earlier (January 1970) with a form questionnaire “to find out where professional assistance should be made available” and then eight months later with a subscription offer to the TC newsletter *Highlights* that urged, “As one of the more than 200 community theatre groups, you are in a position now, to compare the work you are doing with the rest of the theatre field. You are in a position to let your community know where you stand in the over-all picture of amateur theatre in Canada” (Stiles, Tipton). It was likely no surprise to TC that Walterdale avoided placing itself on the national theatre scene by not participating in DDF competitions. But TC, now concerned with the real prospect of disintegration, was putting on the full court press for income generated from its own supporters, current and potential, a strategy to which its predecessor, the DDF, had frequently turned as its deficit mounted (see Lee 177-212).

Thus, at the forthcoming Ottawa meeting, invited participants were to be polled regarding existing provincial assistance to community theatres and the degree to which the provinces would “participate in financial support to Theatre Canada.” It was the next in a series of moves to place nonprofessionalized theatre in a national context, against a country-wide wave of professionalizing “alternative” companies. Nonprofessionalized theatres, from “community” to “multicultural” theatre, were bleeding artists, audiences and turf to the profession. Nationally, where did this place amateur theatre?

Five days before the Ottawa meeting, attendees were forwarded a portion of a letter written to TC president Dr. John A. MacPherson. The letter was a plea from D.M. McCooey, president of the British Columbia Drama Association. McCooey, evidently not alone in his concern, suggested that participants “avoid all talk of Theatre Canada” and instead focus on “the business of defining what are the contemporary needs and priorities of community theatre in
Canada above and beyond those being served at the provincial level.” He called for consideration of the federal government’s role toward community theatre, at which point he suggested “a National organization ‘X’” could be discussed, and under this framework discussion of TC might be introduced. He concluded by articulating what he hoped was the “ultimate goal—meaningful and contemporary development of Canadian community Theatre” (three Porteous letters to Rivet).

Attendees arriving at the Ottawa meeting were presented with a seven-page “Theatre Canada Position Paper” that summarily repositioned the Dominion Drama Festival (and its “distinguished and varied accomplishment in the name of Theatre in Canada”), amateur theatre practice in Canada and the government’s position toward amateur practice. The position paper assumed that while the DDF’s Royal Charter, under which TC was beholden, charged the organization with producing drama festivals, there was more to it, including “to seek improvement in the caliber of community or amateur theatre and other related activities,” including providing adjudicators, professional training and workshops, the preservation of historical materials and particularly the “encouragement of Canadian playwrights and the production of their plays.” As if to suggest that amateur theatre practice was no longer an interest at the federal level, it stated that, “Theatre Canada readily agreed [with provincial associations] that the encouragement of regionalization was in the real interest of community theatre,” and cited the fact that most of TC’s work with amateur theatre had obviously been of primarily regional benefit anyways. TC had had to conclude that a national competition “was no longer realistic or even in the best interest of theatre” due to a “proliferation of theatre forms” where “the traditional index of the three-act play was no longer always possible.” TC wanted to avoid “a dated approach.” (Indeed, in TC’s newsletter, Highlights, the DDF’s last adjudicator, Mr.
Beaulne, began his concluding remarks to the 1970 competition with a consideration of one company’s use of Jerzy Grotowski’s Lab Theatre techniques, a far cry from the content of the DDF’s heyday; “Public”). It went on to say that the professionally chosen “invitational showcase” of amateur productions TC had since been offering found criticism from those who felt it was competing with its own provincially run festivals. The questions of who pays for producing an annual festival and who pays to transport participants were to be “the crux” of the meeting, and the reminder was added that much of the criticism TC had fielded in recent years was a result of their own lack of funding. It observed that the “private sector is unwilling to contribute significantly until it sees what government is willing to do” and, in something of an acknowledgement of insufficient vocabulary with which to properly define nonprofessionalized practices, the position paper “repudiated” a series of recent surveys of TC’s viability, all of which cost “over half of our bank deficit.” And it concluded with a series of suggested resolutions that, in effect, would redefine TC as a federal organization that would present an annual national nonprofessional “showcase festival” and provide a nationwide “Professional Training Programme for amateur and community theatre” (MacPherson). This last offer surely must have seemed to some a duplication of provincial and conservatory services. Noticeably absent from the document was any hint of consideration for the general place or value of community theatre at the national level; this may have prefigured the TC’s own immolation.

At the meeting, Rivet jotted a series of notes, many relating to professional-type activities that Walterdale had done over the years, and activities that the Canada Council and/or TC might provide Walterdale. These included the $1000 Walterdale received from the Canada Council in 1967 to premiere George Ryga’s Nothing But a Man as well as the funding received for Ken Dyba’s direction of Bus Stop in 1970. Rivet also noted available funds for new Canadian plays
and playwrights, professional training programs and festivals, both provincial and national. And in notes likely taken from responses in a feedback session, Rivet alluded to consideration of amateur theatre in a national context: “Do whatever is necessary to create a healthy Drama atmosphere—If a National approach is the way—then they will support. Will share in the big plan.”

Nationalism, Professionalization, Institutionalization, Un/Discipline Performance

Narratives of national maturation, following Filewod, are reperformed at the local level. Moments at which “regional theatres” from coast to coast are established are moments of nationalist reperformance, potentially staged at the expense of local talent. Insomuch as the “maturation” narrative has been applied to Canadian nationhood, concurrently it may be applied to theatrical professionalization in Canada. Consider, for example, Ruth Bowen’s description of the Citadel as having “become [a] beautiful little theatre” (“Dedication”) out of the ashes of the Salvation Army’s occupation, or Walter Learning’s description of some of Canada’s most conspicuous professional theatre institutions:

But to see the maturation of the professional organizations! For example, to see the maturation of an organization (as annoying as it can be at times), like the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres! To see the maturation of Playwrights Canada! The beginnings of the Association of Canadian Designers! (Learning in Kilbour et al 185)

If the “colonialism of spectacle […] is the necessary precondition of imperial invasion,” in Filewod’s words (Performing xv), then might it also be a necessary precondition of the professionalization of an artform—a cultural invasion wherein establishing a professional theatre in a major urban centre acts as a sign for “maturation” toward a national identity. At the local
level, the nation does not simply settle, it must *unsettle* the past with signs of authority.

Edmonton now had a local stage on which Westgate and others could play out their dreams for the growth of professional theatre.

The question of sustainable nonprofessionalized practice adjacent to a professionalizing discipline requires dealing with problems associated with institutionalization; that is, moving from individual objectives to institutional objectives. Few long-term theatre companies, nonprofessionalized or professional, can avoid it, particularly when a building is acquired. In an undated letter (c.1970) to Edmonton’s Parks and Recreation Advisory Board requesting assistance in finding a permanent theatre building for Walterdale, its third and current one, Graves, then artistic director, articulated Walterdale’s nonprofessionalized practice:

> Walterdale is an “amateur” organization in the sense that those people participating in its operation do so without financial reward, and in that it is an organization open to any person prepared to spend the time and effort required. Considerable time and effort is required and we are most fortunate in having such a large number of people of first class ability and experience who are prepared to make such a donation. (“Submission”)

According to Graves, open participatory policies and no payment were Walterdale’s amateur operational edicts. But Graves went on to articulate that “thoughts of growth” were not only exciting for a company that could not “accommodate all the people that wish to see our productions,” but that growth had to be managed carefully, particularly in the public’s perception. “As a struggling organization [in the all-volunteer sense],” he said, “we are able to beg and be given; as a rich organization we would be expected to buy and pay for. This would undermine the entire philosophy of the operation which we see as being amateur and voluntary.” Graves’s angle was that the city had a stake in Walterdale’s success because Walterdale continued to provide entertainment, training and culture to the community. In other words, investing in Walterdale was a sound investment in cultural capital.
Yet there is a sense here that Graves was walking a thin line. Did “growth” necessitate, or at least give the semblance of, professionalization in a modern economy? In October 1973, in one of many reflective moments as *auteur* of Walterdale’s newsletter, Graves put the nonprofessionalized company’s situation in the following terms, in a section titled “Philosophy”:

> Success is therefore the ability of the individual to achieve the objectives of the institution—which brings us to Walterdale Playhouse. Having remained autonomous all these years, we have avoided “institutionalization” and have nobody’s objectives to achieve but our own. Individual objectives turned into success by the assistance and co-operation of other individuals. This is oldtime agricultural thinking and went out when mechanization came in. What we are about to watch—and not from the sidelines—is whether individual leadership and programming is still valid in our society or whether we must be swallowed by institutional leadership and planning. What more could you want for five bucks [the price of a Walterdale membership]?

Did Graves have in mind that the professionalization of Canadian theatre meant the institutionalization of the practice? With care not to say so specifically to Walterdale’s devoted members, was Graves playful pondering the place of Walterdale without, or *within*, the theatre profession in Canada? As the century progressed, erstwhile individual dreams and efforts increasingly required institutionalized solutions. This was due in part to the fact that fifteen successful years into existence, Walterdale was, at the time, surrounded by expectations that continued to grow; both audiences and members expected company “growth.” And leisure time was institutionalizing. Expectations for a type of automatic entertainment were gradually outweighing interest in the individual’s frontier mentality toward production. Individuals worked for institutional, no longer individual, objectives. Would the nonprofessional be required to institutionalize, and even professionalize, thus taking up the offer of disciplinary skill-sets, nationwide camaraderie and fair pay? Is professionalization the most rewarding route to serving the institution in order to serve the art?
Government and professional association practices in Canada have traditionally encouraged, intentionally or not, the institutionalization of the arts. This raises questions about how the participatory “boundaries” of the field of theatre are defined. Though institutions might seek to define the entire field’s boundaries and interactions (both internal and external) by way of “conditions of entry” such as examinations or other forms of cultural capital, they do not solely consecrate the boundaries of fields of production (Bourdieu “Field” 42-43). This is because one of a cultural field’s most significant properties “is the extreme permeability of its frontiers and, consequently, the extreme diversity of the ‘posts’ it offers, which defy any unilinear hierarchization.” This may explain, for example, the degree of diversity of practitioner talent or audience taste even in highly government- and/or profession-regulated fields. This condition is what has led Bourdieu to comment that

The “profession” of writer or artist is one of the least professionalized there is, despite all the efforts of “writers’ associations,” “Pen Clubs,” etc. This is shown clearly by (inter alia) the problems which arise in classifying these agents, who are able to exercise what they regard as their main occupation only on condition that they have a secondary occupation which provides their main income. (43)

These “problems” in classifying the “least professionalized” of society’s professionals apply to the efforts of Equity, PACT and, in support of both, the Canada Council to legitimize disciplined segments of the field of theatre. Underlying these efforts are embedded notions, such as those articulated earlier by Graves, that the artists’ worth is easily devalued. To the detriment of theatre practice, however, nonprofessionalized practice has too often borne the brunt of systemic “othering” by professionals and their support organizations, preventing perceived legitimacy and social capital, as well as erasing an important, indeed vital, participatory aspect of the field.

A further point to be made about the relationship between nonprofessionalized practice and institutionalization is that scholars too have been complicit in this “othering.” This study
seeks to emphasize that it is important to articulate the overriding danger of dividing, or performing acts of erasure upon, active segments of a field of production such as nonprofessionalized practice. The researcher’s “task,”

is not to draw a dividing line between the agents involved in [the field] by imposing a so-called operational definition, which is most likely to be imposed on him [sic] by his own prejudices or presuppositions, but to describe a state (long-standing or temporary) of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents. (Bourdieu “Field” 42 emphasis in original)

This is precisely the error that influential segments of Canadian theatre research have repeatedly committed when they actively offer critical support to the idea of “professional theatre” (an “operational definition”) employed as a semi-defined signifier of quality, competency and taste. We have relied on, and further generated, prejudices that allow fellow scholars to inherit incomplete notions of the internal relationships and external causes and effects of theatre practice. By overemphasizing the “profession” to such an extent that it would seem to comprise the field in its entirety we are in danger of ignoring the influential activities of nonprofessionalized practices, thereby offering an incomplete view of the practice and the history of local and national manifestations of cultural activity. Thus, we might carefully triangulate and question the “three competing principles of legitimacy,” as offered by fellow producers, scholars (paralleling and conferring “dominant” taste) and the public (Bourdieu “Field” 50-51). Each has a traceable history of implicit support for those producers identifying as professional, for the profession’s sake.

John Hirsch’s visit to Edmonton fifty years ago to discuss the feasibility of introducing government-sponsored professional regional theatre to Edmonton prefigured a polarization of interests that would be replicated in Edmonton and across Canada in the years that followed. On the one hand it evidenced that Edmonton theatre producers believed that discussion of
professionalizing theatre was timely; on the other hand it brought to the fore that after consideration, audiences might not yet be ready for professional theatre. This did more than replicate the tired theatre adage “blame the audience.” Implied in this dichotomy was that attempting to professionalize a region’s theatre too early might also have the undesirable effect of not only damning a failed enterprise as a waste of labour and financial resources, but damning the idea of professional theatre in the region too. This position rejects the institutionalizing notion “if you build the theatre, they will come” in favour of an emphasis on building audiences before introducing professional theatre. It was this professional approach to responsibility that the leaders of Edmonton’s nonprofessionalized theatres and the university offered at the time. They carefully acknowledged that professionalization was not necessary the best choice in every situation. And it was this position that Walterdale repeatedly took in the decades that followed as the outpost Citadel, subsequent professional alternative theatres and a nationalizing and institutionalizing profession emerged. Local participation, programming freedom, administrative and plant flexibility and, ironically, contributions to the profession might all be set at risk if Walterdale were to professionalize. The dichotomy that Hirsch’s visit prefigured, then, was in fact that of disciplined theatre practice versus the “un/disciplined” participatory interests of the local population of possible practitioners and audiences.
Conclusions

Toward a Historiography of Nonprofessionalized Theatre

Religion, science and technology, at various points in human history, have assumed positions of untouchable belief. Their value was unquestioned in common conversation. Their mere mention invoked “truth” or the possibility of perfection. In the twentieth century, “professional” began to occupy the same position. It has been the pursuit of this study to problematize the transcendence of “professional,” and its aggressive disciplinary (and disciplining) connotations, within the field of theatre production in order to suggest that fertile ground for creativity is compromised during the course of a cultural field’s drive toward professionalization. Nonprofessionalized theatre has the capacity to address this compromise by lessening the effects of the twin stultifying mechanisms of institutionalization and exclusion that accompany this drive, and by reemphasizing transformation over tradition. In this way, the discourse of theatre is revisited, its institutionalized ways of thinking are reexamined and the field of artistic production is widened.

But where professionalization exists, the nonprofessionalized gaps attuned to new developments can renew a field’s productive forces. This is evident, for example, in Toronto and Edmonton in the 1950s and 1960s when UADC and Walterdale introduced modern European and American drama to Toronto audiences when professional companies could not take the chance on untried programming. Yet, as associations and the federal government colluded to professionalize the field of theatre, they made it more difficult for nonprofessionalized segments to operate. Indeed, many opted themselves to professionalize, as was the case for amateur theatres in Winnipeg and Calgary. Others, however, did not. Able to take advantage of their flexibility, while providing excellent local opportunities to interested practitioners when
professional companies could not, nonprofessionalized companies found ways to be relevant by producing new works, or rarely seen “experimental” plays and classics. Without the force of the term “professional” behind them, or the narrative of professionalization that builds public support for an occupation that seeks respect and permanence among others, nonprofessionalized companies had to be inventive in order to build and maintain audiences. Indeed, some members of their audience might well become their practitioners.

Traditionally, then, nonprofessionalized practices find fertile ground in the spaces unoccupied by professional practice. They can even displace professional practice out of political and social demand, as when the nationalizing agendas held by influential patrons of the arts adopted the Dominion Drama Festival. One reason for this is that, in general terms, the spaces occupied by nonprofessionalized practice are highly adaptable to severe or changing cultural and economic conditions, whereas professional practices are less so. Relatively unencumbered by institutionalized regulations and government sanctioned economic constraints, nonprofessionalized practice fills cultural space more easily than professionalizing practice. This is, in part, when professionalizing practices try to professionalize vigilantly and totally. But to burden a segment of an artistic practice with regulations and economic capital risks losing the very dynamism that made the practice relevant in the first place. Thus, the “threat” that nonprofessionalized practice poses to the profession is not so much a fear that it will dilute the field of quality, or even that it will draw talent and audiences away from professional practice, as some have suggested. Rather, the articulation of nonprofessionalized practice as a threat to professional practice is the result of an institutionalizing art form restricted in a consumer-driven market, and haunted by the threat of its own foreseeable obsolescence.
An important objective of this study has been to illustrate by example that nonprofessionalized theatres are contributing, constitutive and frequently catalytic agents in theatre communities. When Alumnae and Walterdale began to produce plays, amateur practice composed nearly the entirety of the local Toronto and Edmonton theatre communities respectively (though in Walterdale’s case, fully forty years after Alumnae’s founding, Edmontonians looked outside their city for points of comparison with several Canadian cities already further along in professionalizing their theatre practice). But as companies and their actors, directors and technicians began to professionalize by way of disciplinary regulations, standards and funding apparatuses, the principles upon which theatre was practiced were adjusted. Alumnae and Walterdale, operating as if professional, navigated their respective places in and around these changes in order to fill the field’s programming gaps, as they argued internally and critics argued in the press. In turns, this programming has included philanthropy, opportunity for local talent and consciously staging types of plays that are not being staged, such as classics, modern, new works and children’s plays. From these dynamics it should be apparent that these two companies are dynamic arts organizations that have frequently dealt with complex issue of institutionalization and professionalization, both internally and externally. And while both have had to accommodate a considerable degree of institutionalizations, both have consciously chosen nonprofessionalized status in order to maintain flexibility.

While the rewards of professionalization are numerous and highly desirable—for example, the ability for artists to make a living from doing their art in order to allow them not only to do more art, but to live at least somewhat comfortably—in another sense they are not. What the contemporary achievements of Alumnae and Walterdale prove is that in a field of cultural production in which the restricted field of theatre is professionalized to the degree that
the profession can discipline both itself and the nonprofessionalized agents of the field, nonprofessionalized agents can, if they so choose, operate with the freedom necessary to fill production gaps that the professionalize agents cannot. Since the 1970s, this freedom has become increasingly challenged. Thus, whereas Walterdale refuses Equity participation, Alumnae negotiates it as necessary. In fact, maturation, to borrow from received theatre scholarship, is not, nor has ever been, completely bonded to professionalization. It is the healthy give and take of a theatre community with respected professional and amateur agents, each creative and dynamic, that allows optimal opportunity for local talent to train and emerge, and for the widest breadth of programming possibility to flourish.

Today’s commercial market has picked up on the value of the amateur producer with the proliferation of knowledge and material on the internet. Many online producers have attempted to follow a professionalizing approach toward accruing economic and social capital by starting out as amateur producers and becoming professional producers. But many more remain as amateur producers—blog writers and music and photo sharing participants, for example—in order to practise their craft outside of paid work hours. Whereas in the twentieth century amateur practice in most cultural fields was considered either a steppingstone to professionalization or a waste of time, today (on the internet at least) it is understood as a legitimate contributor to society, often working in parallel with its profession counterparts. This current state is comparable to the amateur theatre practice of Alumnae’s early days, when their contribution was celebrated; it took the professionalizing mechanisms and rhetoric of practitioners, instructors and complicit scholars in the mid- and late-twentieth century to problematize the idea of amateur practice in the theatre, to the detriment of the entire field. Theatre practice and performance
might well prove opportunistic in not only respecting nonprofessionalized work as it once did, but, in an interdisciplinary sense, learn from nonprofessionalized practices.

Implicit in my argument is that healthy theatre communities are grown from audience members who are also given the opportunity to participate in the very practices to which they are spectators. By drawing little to no government funding, nonprofessionalized theatres exchange box office income and private donations for social capital in the form of aesthetic taste (new works, classical theatre, modern “intellectual” fare) as well as the possibility of future participation as a member (or “guest”) practitioner. To its detriment, the profession in large urban centres in Canada repeatedly strikes a hard line between the audiences (expected to be eager, awed consumers) and the artists, positioned as purveyors of art. Nonprofessionalized practice provides a bridge for audiences to learn how to “read” live performance by also practicing it if they wish. This creates ground for further consumption and production. This perspective widens the economic base so that, for example, theatre audiences at noncommercial theatres are not, in the main, other professional artists supporting their colleagues at reduced or complementary ticket prices.

By viewing the field in this way, the question of quality is removed from the ownership of professionalized groups and redistributed across the entire field. Thus “professional” is redefined as a collection of disciplinary tactics and regimented production criteria among coteries acknowledged by the government, influential practitioners and, consequently, the public. The other agents in the field are “nonprofessionalized.” Those segments of culture described by Richard Florida as “the creative class” are empirically numerated from the ranks of identifying professionals. To many, to do otherwise would be to propagate a modern blasphemy, to validate amateur work on par with professional. But there may be value in taking issue not with notions
of quality of work, but with the stratifying forms that limit artistic qualities in the theatre, that produce aesthetic taste and name it “quality.” If, as Bourdieu says, “the ‘eye’ is a product of history reproduced by education” (Distinction 3), then there is value in questioning the role our education systems in defining professional and amateur space. Creativity has flourished outside of professionalized regimes in recent years; there may be much to gain from examining its qualities.

In one prominent reference book, David Gardner concludes that amateur practice was pushed out of urban centres under the weight of professionalization: “With the arrival of professional theatre, the amateur movement did not go underground but moved out into the suburbs of the larger cities, or found welcome in smaller communities not served by the mainstream” (Gardner 309). However, since 1972 Walterdale has thrived in the heart of Edmonton’s Old Strathcona theatre district, while Alumnae has thrived in downtown Toronto. Many other longstanding nonprofessionalized companies remain in the downtown core of their cities and provide local urban opportunities for involvement in relevant theatre alongside their professionalized counterparts. Though their present connections to each other do not compare to those of the days of the DDF, or to the height of the Little Theatre movement, their support of their local professional counterparts has hardly diminished (even if this respect has not always been reciprocated). There is no “amateur movement” to speak, in or out of urban environments, because nonprofessionalized companies operate locally and alongside professionalized companies, within a mutual field of production. Whereas once there was an “amateur movement,” born of the Little Theatres, that used a collective identity to gain national and international recognition, collective identity today is reserved for professional practitioners and their associations.
Artistic creativity operates by filling gaps in the practice. Nonprofessionalized companies, for example, operate autonomous of disciplinary identities, for the benefit of the field. As the original “alternative theatres,” nonprofessionalized companies defined the ways and means for new companies to start up in antithesis to a “commercial” or “mainstream” environment. By resisting collective identities—that is, by resisting disciplinary techniques that fix and order populations and practices—by combining the labours of core and nomadic participatory members, contemporary nonprofessionalized theatre companies fertilize artistic innovation, choice and creativity.

The extent to which the professional agents of a theatrical field value their nonprofessionalized counterparts is an important indicator of the state of the field. For example, negative views of nonprofessionalized practice may be signs of an insecure field, one that has difficulty maintaining audience or government support and therefore perceives competition in an oversaturated market. In contrast, positive views of nonprofessionalized practice may be signs of a healthy field in which the community supports both professional and participatory theatre and values them for their contributions. As this study has illustrated, professionalization is accompanied by negativity toward amateur work, much of it a result of tactically denying the very history out of which the profession intends to grow. This has much to do with intense attempts in the professional era to separating labour from leisure and, as Murray Frame puts it, “democratiz[e] the professional ideal” (Frame 1053). Amateur practice, this narrative described and inscribed, had no place but as a past steppingstone, perchance to be remembered in fond reminiscent or facetious anecdote, depending on the need of the moment. This steppingstone rubric became viral in a humanistic, anthropomorphic discourse of maturation appended to the discourse of nationalization.
This study offers an overdue reexamination of the idea of what it means to be an “amateur,” *as opposed to a* “professional.” When Frances Halpenny describes some of Alumnae’s founders as “women in the professions” (Alumnae 2001, 1-2), and Scott Sharplin lists participants in his Walterdale production of *King Lear* (Feb 2006) as including a “retired English teacher,” a “dry wall installer,” “a security guard” and a doctor (Sharplin 45), we are reminded that professional and amateur statuses fruitfully mix. They are not mutually exclusive and do not easily define an individual. Practitioners at nonprofessionalized theatres frequently identified as “professionals” in their day jobs, and “volunteers” at the theatre. It is not that someone is inherently amateur and therefore can do no better than *be* amateur; it is that they choose to practise certain activities in a nonprofessionalized capacity. This is a choice afforded by the professionalization of theatre practice; and one that can best be made today with confidence and pride. And it has valuable consequences. To follow Chris Anderson, it is this diversity of talents and inclinations that counteract scarcity effects in cultural practices. Variety in ways of producing opens possibilities in the variety of cultural products and the dissemination of thought and activity.

An important conclusion to be drawn in looking at the programming choices made by both Alumnae Theatre and Walterdale Theatre Associates is that their attention to local theatre conditions—that is, staging that which is not being staged while, at other times, programming that which is *au currant*—is that “movements” are not necessary defined by the profession. For most of their histories, both companies have actively pursued programming strategies that balance trends with absences, and both have shown acute awareness of the place and potential of “professional” and “amateur” companies. Indeed, the very premise that theatre is best arranged into “movements” at all is contested by Alan Filewod, who argues that there are too many
exceptions in any movement—particularly those that are listed at the outset of this study as
constituting received Canadian theatre history—to allow them to be constitutively defined at all
(Filewod “Introduction” ix). In fact, we might argue—as indeed this study attempts to do—that
the very delineations of “professional” and “amateur” require serious scrutiny if accurate study
may be made of the institutions, groups and individuals who practice within and between these
two poles.

Throughout, I have positioned Alumnae and Walterdale at a similar place within their
separate, local fields of cultural production. In a sense, I have argued that both companies
(specifically their executive leadership) have operated from a knowing, aware and active
position. From the founding moments of each company, educated, talented and determined core
members have operated with a sense that the theatre they are making fills a need that is larger
than any individual’s self-entitlement or quest for personal edification. While both have had an
influential hand in new play production, for example, they have also proven that variety builds
and then sustains local performance ecologies.

Comparable to Frame’s reasons for professionalizing (self-serving interests and market
protection), a study of contemporary nonprofessionalized theatres must acknowledge two poles.
On the one side are the individual interests of those constitutive practitioners whose lives are
impacted by the theatres at which they work; on the other are the interests of the wider society of
which these theatres are constructed and which they themselves construct culturally, socially and
economically. To pull too far in the first direction is to personalize the study into the category of
“fond reminiscence,” a valuable document in its own right but one that ignores the place of the
theatre more widely. To pull too far toward the second direction is to strip the study of the very
humanity inherent to all artistic production, the very agency that drives and structures all
constitutive parts. I have attempted to be aware of this negotiation at all points of this study and to do justice to both.

In the introduction to his edited collection of essays titled *Theatre Histories*, part of the determined, seminal, yet vaguely elegiac *Critical Perspectives on Canadian Theatre in English* series, Alan Filewod delineates three successive moments in the relatively young history of theatre history in Canada. The first “generation” was (I repeat his use of the past tense) “recuperative,” producing “raw data through exhaustive trawling through archives and microfilms”; the second “sought to identify absences and erasures”; and the third (in the present simple) sees the thing itself “disappear as a discipline” (Filewod “Introduction” viii, ix, xi). Usefully, however, we might borrow Filewod’s critique of movements, as espoused in the same *Introduction*, to suggest that this progression is not inevitable. There may be, for example, a reexamination of these categories. The “recuperative” generation was, in a sense, addressing “absences and erasures” of theatre in Canada generally, and the “absences and erasures” generation included among its ranks those that not only sought to add but in many cases supplant the masculinist, colonial, monovocal methodologies of the past “recuperative” generation. And while it is possible that this (somewhat paradoxical) veracious ambiguity is what threatens to “disappear” Canadian theatre history, it may in fact be the very thing that ensures both survive not so much as parent and offspring, but—as might be viewed from the rear-view mirror of the next century—contemporaries, siblings (born in different years). This study attempts to do, and show, the work of historical recuperation and identification of absences and erasures in so much as it begins to examine two companies, among a great many, that have been ignored in scholarship, though not in practice, because they are nonprofessionalized.
But of course, what has been ignored can be ignored again. This fact is ever evident when old histories of past generations are left unexamined. Whereas reviews, programs, handbills, scripts and all the documents that constitute the discursive history of one company and its age may be interpreted to form one narrative that addresses the recuperative needs of one scholar, a second look at the same material at a different time, with a different intention, will produce summarily different conclusions. This is what Foucault called for in trading truth hunting for discourse analysis. It is the ways in which these histories are constructed that are the responsibilities of recuperation and its twin, erasure. Thus, a second study of this same material might focus more closely on those utterances within the very same documents that disparage the place of nonprofessionalized theatre and the practitioners who constituted it before the Massey Commission, at the DDF, during the “heady” days of the alternative—all theatre arises as alternative to something—theatre movement and even at today’s Fringe Festivals (for these are the terms which today’s scholars have inherited). There are histories of nonprofessionalized theatre, as well as frameworks and languages to study them. Thus, we can view as anathema that the discipline of Canadian theatre history, and the profession that it created, “disappears,” for the act of recuperating the past in order to locate not only erasures but also that which has been presented in plain view is the practice of knowledge, the production of culture and the performance of history.
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