

Sydney Risk and the Everyman Theatre*

JAMES HOFFMAN

When the *Vancouver Province* announced on 14 September 1946 the formation of Everyman Theatre, the headline read: "CITY TO GET PERMANENT THEATRE GROUP." The dream of such a theatre in the city, and indeed in the province, was not a new one: many enthusiasts had laid plans for establishing ongoing theatre — perhaps beginning with the "annual" Hudson's Bay Company theatricals in Victoria in the early 1850s. What distinguished Sydney Risk's work was that he possessed the skills and vision to operate his Everyman Theatre Company long enough to train the first generation of Vancouver's modern professional theatre — which today continues in the work of the Arts Club, the Playhouse, and many other theatrical ventures. Moreover, his timing was excellent: in the years immediately following World War II, post-war prosperity and the new Canadian cultural awareness, expressed formally in the Massey Commission Report (1951), made the time ripe for the development of a truly indigenous theatre.

British Columbia, with its sparse, shifting population and the dominance of British and American cultures, long teetered between the local, amateur kind of theatre and the touring, professional. Both reinforced ties to a distant homeland and tended to be light and escapist. The first productions were amateur: songs and farces given aboard British warships in Esquimalt harbour in the 1850s. The first professional performance was American: the New Orleans Serenaders, a minstrel troupe, played in a tent in Victoria in 1858. The idea of an indigenous theatre at first simply meant the establishment of a theatre building to be used by these kinds of groups; only later did attention turn to the establishment of resident stock companies. By the 1920s these were flourishing in Vancouver and, in a lesser way, in Victoria.

At the same time there emerged for the first time in British Columbia

* A shortened version of this paper was read to the conference of the Association for Canadian Theatre History, at the University of Manitoba, May 1986.

serious attempts to address the problem of an authentic Canadian drama and theatre. One of the earliest took place in the hinterland, on an orchard farm in Naramata, under the direction of Carroll Aikins. Aikins, a visionary who had absorbed in his travels and study in Europe and the United States the new attitudes of Craig and Appia, espoused simplified decor, plasticity, and the use of three-dimensional staging at a time when painted, vertical, "illusionist" scenery was commonplace. He also had direct contacts with such leading innovative companies as The Birmingham Repertory, the Chicago Little Theatre and New York's Neighborhood Playhouse. In 1920 he built his "Home Theatre" at Naramata and established the "Canadian Players," a group dedicated to the production of artistic works and the training of Canadian actors. There were plans to tour its productions, which would include Canadian plays, across the country.¹ Similar work was attempted in Victoria at the same time by transplanted English performer L. Bullock-Webster, who opened his BC Dramatic School in 1921. One of his goals too was professional training and, in his own words, the development of "the works of our own Dramatists . . . played by Canadian actors."² Although these men worked hard, both were essentially dedicated amateurs, and neither was able to produce a significant number of mainstream Canadian actors or develop playwrights. But they were a beginning, and Sydney Risk, two decades later, continued where they left off.

As noted, most development took place in Vancouver, where it must be stressed how important were certain amateur groups, the university, and even the radio. The best amateur — or "Community" as they were sometimes called — groups were inspired by the Little Theatre movement that originated in Europe and was transplanted, about 1910, to North America. The movement was an idealist revolt against the large commercial theatre, seen as governed by monetary interests and out of touch with new understandings of man — now evoked in either progressive, scientific figures — the "new man" — or in eternal, mythopoeic characters. The Little Theatres produced quality scripts by playwrights such as Synge, Maeterlinck, Pirandello, and Shaw. They provided a place not only for the acquisition of theatre skills but for the gaining of purified, quasi-religious commitment. Theatres were "temples" and their supporters and participants "votaries." Out of this movement — Lady Gregory and

¹ For a fuller description, see James Hoffman, "Carroll Aikins and the Home Theatre," *Theatre History in Canada* 7(1) (Spring 1986): 50-70.

² L. Bullock-Webster, "The Work of the B.C. Dramatic School," t.s., n.d., Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

W. B. Yeats of the Irish Literary Theatre are examples — came emphasis on the discovery of one's native drama.

In 1915 the UBC Campus Players began to mount important works and play them in Vancouver and on annual tours through the province. In 1920 the Vancouver Little Theatre Association commenced operations. It was amateur, but owing to the guidance of early directors such as Frederic Wood, staged seasons of plays that were, according to one commentator, "alert, up-to-date, and judicious"³ — just the kind of plays referred to above. The sharing of personnel among these groups was demonstrated when, that same year, Aikins met the UBC touring student actors at Penticton, told them about his new "Home Theatre," and brought several of them into his first group at Naramata. The UBC Extension Department, during the 1930s, offered the services of inspired teachers such as Dorothy Somerset and Risk himself in workshops given around the province; the same department began its Summer School of Theatre in 1938. Many of the Everyman actors would be drawn from this school. At the same time, the CBC, under Andrew Allen, provided three years of radio programs of instruction directed to community theatre groups. All these efforts produced generations of trained theatre personnel, so necessary for a development of an indigenous theatre.

Indeed, Vancouver theatre flourished in the 1920s, with numerous resident stock and touring companies playing in nine legitimate houses. The city's own Empress players, the Allen Players and the British Guild, along with visits by reputable international groups like the Stratford-Upon-Avon Players, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and the Abbey Players, offered Vancouver audiences regular professional fare, and even the occasional long-running hit such as *So This is London*, which enjoyed a record ten-week run. Risk, active in this period under the stage name Dickson McNaughton, characterized the 1920s in Vancouver as theatrically "booming"⁴ — though with the advent of radio, the talking movies, and the economic devastation of the 1930s, the professional, commercial theatre in Vancouver virtually disappeared, leaving only the amateur and educational groups with their non-commercial ideals.

³ Andrew Parkin, "The New Frontier: Towards an Indigenous Theatre in British Columbia," in *Theatrical Touring and Founding in North America*, ed. L. W. Conolly (Westport: Greenwood, 1982), 111.

⁴ Sydney Risk, interviewed with Dorothy Somerset by Laurinda Daniells, 25 February 1979, UBC Library, special collections. This lengthy interview, available in a very good transcription, is an excellent source of Vancouver theatre history. Also useful: Peter Guildford's "The Development of Professional Theatre in Vancouver" (unpublished M.A. thesis, UBC, 1981). Further quotations of Risk's or Somerset's, unless otherwise indicated, are from Daniells' interview.

All, however, was far from lost, for the 1930s saw a growing interest in "quality" theatre, sparked by the new Dominion Drama Festival, and, later in the decade, visits of exceptional touring theatre. In 1933, under Dorothy Somerset's direction, the VLTA won the regional DDF and then played the national competition in Ottawa. The DDF — which commenced that same year — functioned, in Somerset's words, to make "drama groups . . . aware of standards." One result, after pleas from community drama groups for regular training, was the establishment in 1938 of the UBC summer school of the theatre, with the distinguished Ellen van Volkenburg (a leader in the American Little Theatre movement) acting as first guest director. Equally, visits to Vancouver by several international figures — among them Eva Le Gallienne in several Ibsen plays, Helen Hayes in *Victoria Regina* and Raymond Massey in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* — reminded serious theatre people of the possibility and, indeed, the need for a community, *professional* theatre which would go beyond the amateur and even commercial in setting high standards. To Sydney Risk there was an additional concern: the need for a permanent company that could train and employ young Canadians who, at the time, had to "go to the United States . . . or shut up."⁵ It was to meet just this requirement that the Everyman Theatre Company was founded in 1946.

Sydney Risk, born in Vancouver in 1908, acted in the drama club at Kitsilano High School, then each year in the Players Club at UBC, where he completed a B.A. in English. One year after his graduation in 1930, he succeeded the club's director and founder, Frederic Wood. In 1933 he went to train in England at London's Old Vic theatre school, at that time under the direction of Tyrone Guthrie. A student of actor Murray McDonald, he also managed to get what he described as "good parts"⁶ with London theatre companies. He left the school to work with the Worthing and Coventry Repertory Theatres, then for a stint with a touring company performing Shakespeare. Returning to Canada late in 1938, he was asked by Gordon Shrum, UBC Dean of Graduate Studies, to teach theatre with Dorothy Somerset, which he did during the summers of 1939 and 1940. For six summers he also headed the theatre division at the Banff School of Fine Arts. He also managed to secure an appointment to the staff of the University of Alberta at Edmonton, as drama director for the Department of Extension, and commenced teaching, directing, giving workshops, and adjudicating. A leave of absence in 1942-43, funded by a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship, permitted him to obtain

⁵ Vancouver *Province*, 29 Nov. 1946.

⁶ Sydney Risk, personal interview, 23 August 1985.

his Master of Arts degree in theatre at Cornell University, and in 1945 he was appointed head of the University of Alberta Extension Department's Fine Arts Division. The following year, however, he left that institution to realize his dream of founding a professional Canadian repertory company. After the collapse of Everyman in 1953, he continued to teach at UBC, where, according to Dorothy Somerset, founder and first head of theatre, he "made a major contribution to the development of theatre at the university."⁷ Retiring in 1966, he continued to maintain an interest in the theatre until his death in 1985.

The immediate origins of Risk's Everyman Theatre are to be found in his recognition of the need to provide a professional theatre that would, first, provide work for young Canadian actors and, second, allow continual training and development of these actors. It must be remembered that at this time there was no professional theatre on the West Coast. Indeed, the existence of a Canadian Theatre itself was doubted; as a Canadian Press writer put it, "To tell the average Canadian that there is a 'Canadian Theatre' would probably evoke surprise."⁸ In founding Everyman Risk was, of course, reestablishing the professional activity which had existed in Vancouver in the 1920s but had disappeared from view for the better part of two decades. This made him appear as something of a crusader: one journalist described his actors as "Missionaries in Makeup,"⁹ while the *Province* dealt with his activities under the headline "Drama Man Fights Hollywood."¹⁰

What he was crusading for was the kind of theatre he had seen in Britain in the 1930s. The modern repertory theatre system, which had its origins in the famous J. E. Vedrenne and H. Granville-Barker series of new plays and revivals at the Court theatre (1904-1907), first came to popular attention as a means of presenting precisely that sort of mix. At the same time Annie Horniman established the Abbey Theatre in Dublin (1903) and achieved worldwide fame for an almost wholly national repertory; this company, and her Manchester Repertory (1908) each consisted of ongoing companies of actors and dramatists, which produced important indigenous and even revolutionary work, from Synge, Yeats, and Shaw to Brighouse, Houghton, and Monkhouse. These theatres were followed by the Glasgow Repertory (1909), the Liverpool Repertory (1911) and — probably the most significant of all the English provincial reper-

⁷ Dorothy Somerset, personal interview, 22 August 1985.

⁸ *Province*, 19 April 1947.

⁹ *New World*, April 1947.

¹⁰ *Province*, 29 Nov. 1946.

tries — the Birmingham Repertory (1913), which had produced Carroll Aikins' play, *The God of Gods*, in 1919. One of the most notable of the Repertory theatres in London was the Old Vic, especially important for its seasons of Shakespeare. Another was the Everyman, which, under Norman MacDermott's direction in the 1920s, presented new English plays and significant modern foreign plays in translation. Like other repertory theatres, it maintained a permanent company and provided an important training ground for young British actors. It was this system that Sydney Risk, like so many other serious students of the theatre, came to admire following his arrival in London.

There was much to marvel at: Guthrie's productions of Shakespeare; stagings of *The Cherry Orchard*, *Love for Love*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*; work by the young Charles Laughton and James Mason; brilliant direction, the best example of which was Guthrie's wonderful *Measure for Measure*;¹¹ and the newer ideas of simple staging that came from Poel, Granville-Barker, and Shaw. Above all was the Old Vic's concern with moral uplift. Dedicated by social reformer Emma Cons to the regeneration of "her people," especially the victims of poverty and squalor living in the area of Waterloo Station, its work in this area was continued by Cons' niece Lillian Baylis. Guthrie, to be sure, changed its character in some measure, but the audience was still, in his own words, "for the most part . . . serious and predominantly young working people from all over London."¹² It was this kind of concern that Risk brought back with him to Canada. The first Everyman programme — the one used on the four-province tour — proclaimed the company's intentions: "through extensive study, practice and improvement, to set an even higher standard for amateur groups . . . to bring theatre right to the people, at prices which enable every person to attend . . . [and] . . . to give freshness to each production." "Here," it concluded, was to be "a people's theatre in every sense of the words. . . ."¹³

The idea of forming a professional Canadian company had been with Risk for some time. As early as 1933, the *Vancouver Province* reported, he had been "appalled by the national frustration of Canadian actors, playwrights and play audiences"¹⁴ who could neither produce nor experience an indigenous theatre. During his Edmonton period, he frequently shared the dream with his students and other faculty. By the spring of

¹¹ Tyrone Guthrie, *A Life in the Theatre* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960), 109.

¹² *Ibid.*, 99.

¹³ Original copy of the programme, in the possession of the author.

¹⁴ *Province*, 29 Nov. 1946.

1946, as a participant in the first western interuniversity drama festival — which he helped organize — he was inviting selected former students and others to join him in the Everyman Company, to be formed that fall in Vancouver. That summer he organized six of his students into a group called the “Provincial Players,” which became a kind of precursor of Everyman. For six weeks they toured throughout Alberta three one-act plays: Elsie Park Gowan’s *To Meet the Chinook*, Robert Gard’s *Raising the Devil*, and Chekhov’s *The Boor*. One of them — Lois McLean, a former student of Risk’s at Banff and Edmonton — in fact became a key member of the Everyman company in the early years.

Although Risk was the most visible and most active director of Everyman, there were at the beginning three people involved in that role. George Brodersen, English professor and dramatics director at the University of Manitoba, shared Risk’s enthusiasm for the concept of a western Canadian theatre company, as did Dorothy Somerset, and both became associate directors. The three had met at The Banff Western Theatre Conference, in 1943, and laid early plans. Not only did Brodersen assist during the first season with Everyman’s four-province tour; he became, as well, a financial backer.¹⁵ Somerset, working full time in dramatics with the UBC Department of Extension, assisted Risk in training the young company — though her help was limited in the first year to advice and encouragement and in the second to several training sessions.

The original company recruited that summer included Lois McLean, from Edmonton, a recent graduate of the University of Alberta, and a member of Risk’s acting class at Banff; Esther Nelson, a Ponoka, Alberta, school teacher, acting at Banff; Hilda Nuel, who taught at Powell River, B.C., and was also acting at Banff; Shirley Kerr, a Vancouver newspaper reporter, acting with Vancouver Little Theatre; Drew Thompson, a graduate of the University of Toronto, acting at Hart House; Ron Rosvald of Calgary, acting with Calgary Little Theatre; David Major of Vancouver, acting with Vancouver Little Theatre; Ted Follows of Winnipeg, who had acted under Brodersen at Manitoba, and was then at Banff; Floyd Caza of Kelowna, B.C., who had had amateur theatre experience and was currently acting at Banff; Edward McNamara, a Vancouver taxi driver, acting with Vancouver Little Theatre; Murray Westgate of the Regina Little Theatre; Vancouver’s Arthur Hill, who had acted with the Players Club and CBC-Radio; and Peggy Hassard,

¹⁵ *Province* (29 Nov. 1946) reported that he supplied “one-third cash,” with another one-half provided by Risk — reportedly \$6,000, according to *The New World* (April 1947).

also of Vancouver, who had performed with the Vancouver Little Theatre and CBC-Radio. There were no auditions: all were people Risk had worked with previously. Including Risk, the company numbered fourteen. In October, 1946, very much in the manner of Copeau or Stanislavski, it retreated to the isolation of the country to form a company and prepare for the first season.

The place chosen was the resort community of Gibsons Landing, where Risk's parents owned a summer cottage that Everyman was allowed to use. Here, in spartan surroundings, there was a daily regimen of training, rehearsal, and inspiration. The schedule began at 6:30 a.m., with eurythmics on the lawn led by Risk, followed by breakfast at 7:00 — cooked by several of the company in military style "fatigues." The general work was organized in four-day "duties" of cooking, dishwashing, stoking fires, and cleaning which everyone, including Risk, performed. Food in the budget conscious group was served in "rations." During the mornings and afternoons there were rehearsals in the Gibsons community hall. Those not needed at rehearsal worked in a shed at the back of the cottage constructing scenery and costumes. After dinner, the company sat around the fireplace reading plays and theatre books, such as the works of Stanislavski, and holding discussions about the theatre. This was necessary, for, as Lois McLean reports, "There was no professional theatre at that time in Vancouver, and some of us had never seen a professional play."¹⁶ During these talks Risk frequently spoke of his experiences in English repertory theatres: it was clear that he hoped Everyman would become like them — a kind of Birmingham or Liverpool Repertory Company for Vancouver.

Risk instilled in the young company, whose median age was 22, a strong vision. "We felt," recalled MacLean, "we were very special . . . we saw the whole concept going on for 20, 30 years. We all had wonderful ideas in the beginning, [we were] talking about when we were going to represent Canada at the Edinburgh Festival." What was the message that Risk conveyed to his company? Reference to the name Everyman is instructional. Again, McLean: "The word Everyman came from a theatre he had seen in England, but also [the company] was for everyman, everybody in it was equal — there was a 'no star' system." In modern repertory fashion, Risk envisioned a permanent company of actors and tech-

¹⁶ Lois McLean, personal interviews, 3, 29 April, 1 May 1986. I am deeply grateful to Ms. McLean for her generous, invaluable assistance not only in providing much information on the early Everyman years but also in sharing personal source materials and leading me to several other former Everyman members.

nicians — and ideally playwrights — who would work together for several years, and become a first-rate, *national* company: “He saw it as a western Canadian company to begin with. In the long run he’d like to have seen it as a company that travelled across Canada, and travelled the world.” What this meant in everyday terms for the members of the company was that the work would be “serious,” that there would be long hours of rehearsal, that company members would perform all tasks from acting to technical work to housecleaning, and that there would be study of the theatre. Just as repertory had proved to be the elixir which had restored British theatre to health, so, Risk thought, it could do the same in Canada. It remained, however, to be seen how the remedy — which was beginning to falter in many instances in Britain soon after World War II — would work in British Columbia.

The “repertory” that fall included only one play, Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and the first public performance took place in November at tiny Robert’s Creek, near Gibsons, with about fifty people in attendance. The first Vancouver performance was at Ladner, a rural suburb, in late November, for which the *Province* ran a photo-feature of the company rehearsing and working at Gibsons Landing. It explained that the Everyman venture represented “the first attempt of a professional Canadian theatrical company to make a living in Canada since movie interests killed off Canadian drama as a matter of policy in the 1920s and ’30s.”¹⁷ But the play was not to run long in Vancouver: a two-week tour of the towns in the Fraser Valley as far as Hope followed, then a tour of Vancouver Island from Victoria to Nanaimo. Just before Christmas the company returned to Gibsons to rehearse two short plays that, played together, would enable the company to offer another evening’s entertainment. One was a Canadian one-act, especially written for Everyman by Elsie Park Gowan, *The Last Caveman*; the other was Chekhov’s *The Marriage Proposal*.

Partly because of Risk’s ambitions to bring drama to the people, and partly because the company lacked a permanent base of operations, it was decided to go on the road on a four-province, 57-stop tour, from Vancouver to Winnipeg. A used, 26-seat former RCAF bus and a 12-ton truck were purchased. The bus was converted to seat twelve persons and the remaining part was adapted to a living quarters with kitchen and storage space. Sleeping berths for the men were installed; the women members would sleep in hotels. The truck was used for transporting scenery and luggage.

¹⁷ *Province*, 29 Nov. 1946.



l. to r. top: Murray Westgate, Ed McNamara, David Major; back row: Drew Thompson, Arthur Hill, Esther Nelson; front row: Dick McDonald (Edmonton Local), Sydney Risk, Shirley Kerr, Peggy Hassard (Mrs. Arthur Hill), Ted Follows, Hilda Nuel, Lois McLean.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALBERTA GOVERNMENT

The great Everyman tour began 6 January 1947 with the premiere of *The Last Caveman* at Abbotsford, British Columbia. Seventy-five performances were given throughout the four western provinces, with many one-night stands and longer runs in Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg. In each small town the company performed either an evening of *Earnest* or one of *Caveman* and *Marriage Proposal*; in the three larger towns, where Everyman played for a week, the two bills were alternated nightly in repertory fashion. Brodersen travelled ahead and arranged bookings and a sponsor in every town, the agreement being that the sponsoring organization — often the local Lion's Club — was responsible for publicity. In return the club received a percentage of the box office.

Not surprisingly, given its mission of bringing a repertory company of fourteen people, three plays, and all the equipment and luggage to widely separated communities where many people had never before seen live theatre, the tour encountered problems. There were vehicle breakdowns: the bus gave up as early as Boston Bar in the Fraser Canyon, which required the company thereafter to use public buses, and the truck broke down in southern Alberta. Everyman finally had to rely completely on trains — and was held up once by snow for forty-eight hours at Moose Jaw station. Equally, however, there was much to take pride in. The company missed only one engagement — at Moosomin, Saskatchewan — and played to mostly full houses. Audience reception, according to McLean, was “excellent: there were a lot of people who told us they’d never seen a play before.” Company member Shirley Kerr reported a reception at one town that was probably typical: “Abbotsford gave us a wonderful ovation and a very welcome supper after the show.”¹⁸

In late April the Everyman Company returned to Vancouver and opened a four-day run at the York Theatre, home of the Vancouver Little Theatre Association. The *Province*¹⁹ praised all aspects of the production, beginning its review by noting the fact that a Canadian play, presented by a Canadian theatre company, had received three curtain calls. Finally, a brief tour of Victoria and Vancouver Island completed the company's first season.

Analysis of Everyman's first year is instructive, for even though the company lasted another six seasons, both its strengths and its weaknesses were already evident. From the great tour the company derived immense stature and publicity. The *Province*²⁰ concluded that “an important turn-

¹⁸ *Province*, 27 Jan. 1947.

¹⁹ *Province*, 23 April 1947.

²⁰ *Province*, 19 April 1947.

ing point in the history of our Canadian Theatre" had been reached with the "success" of Risk's venture. The Canadian theatre, it was sure, would go on to "take its place among the theatres of the world." Certainly Risk had proven that a repertory company could function in the western Canadian setting. Young and talented Canadian actors could make a living in their craft, a Canadian play could take a featured place in the repertoire of quality plays alongside Wilde and Chekhov, and, perhaps best of all, a receptive audience could be found.

There were, however, many problems. The most persistent was financial. On the return leg of the tour, as the company reached North Battleford, Saskatchewan, money was so low that it was virtually unable to continue on to Edmonton. One of the company members sold her graduation present, a typewriter, for \$200 so train tickets could be purchased. Risk himself, the heaviest investor in *Everyman*, "lost his shirt" according to Lois McLean. It was largely money out of his own pocket that had financed the two vehicles that had broken down, and even though most salaries were covered by the box office, it was he who personally made good when there was a shortfall. Even his father, who had already contributed in allowing the company to rehearse on his property at Gibsons, lost money on the venture. Many of the actors, too, assisted, sometimes by direct contributions, always by accepting low wages. They were paid \$15 a week salary, with an additional \$2 per performance, plus a \$10 meal allowance, and accommodation expenses or arrangements were looked after — although many nights there were billets. This remuneration was poor — about one-third an average salary for that time. Notwithstanding all efforts, however, the company's financial problems remained. By season's end it was broke.

Equally serious were staffing problems. The company, to progress artistically, needed to maintain a continuing core of members who, having gained experience over time, would be able to help and instruct new participants. Instead it lost nearly everyone. Many, including associate director Brodersen — unable to continue personally subsidizing the venture — left for more lucrative jobs. Space, too, was a difficulty. The company still had none of its own in which to rehearse, build scenery, store properties, or present its work. All of this meant — ironically enough — that at the moment of its greatest triumph, following completion of the well-received first season, Risk was left with a company in serious financial trouble, without adequate membership, and lacking a theatre. He nevertheless continued to invest his energy — and his money — in the effort to realize his "dream," all of this without access to the sort of private

wealth which fuelled the work of such philanthropists as Lilian Baylis or Barry Jackson.

By the second season, thanks largely to Risk's efforts, the company was able to regroup and reorganize. This was partly by reducing the scale of its operations. Of the original group there remained only Lois McLean, actress and company secretary, Floyd Caza, actor and stage manager, and Esther Nelson, actress and stage manager — along, of course, with Risk himself. Salaries were even lower: now contracted for only \$10 weekly, members needed to hold regular jobs, and worked as teachers or secretaries during the day and as members of Everyman in evenings and on weekends. This meant less time available for those purposeful, vision-making discussions around the fireplace. And it also meant giving up touring. The dream of a vital repertory company, with national and world aspirations, was replaced by the simple need to survive, to find a home and an audience.

Efforts to this end were materially aided by Risk's finding space in Vancouver, in former army huts at the University of British Columbia property at Little Mountain. This meant that the company would not only have a base but also the beginnings of a link with the university. Indeed, the "educational" shift that Everyman was to make beginning this year was to prove a crucial one, for Risk had also realized that a great untapped audience existed in the schools. In August he was in Victoria meeting with Minister of Education G. M. Weir, asking for provincial assistance for Everyman either in the form of funding or in other less direct ways — such as granting permission to play in school facilities. He represented Everyman as "an educational community repertory theatre on a professional basis" and made a point of stressing its concern "to appeal particularly to young people."²¹ Financial aid was not, however, forthcoming; he did, nonetheless, get ministry encouragement to produce plays for the schools; and the first clear result of this was the company's opening of its second season at Richmond High School, in a student matinée of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with an evening performance in the same venue for the community. Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, another work that could be performed for either adult or student audiences, was also offered. Both plays were toured throughout the Fraser Valley in October, and then, in the following month, in the Okanagan. Plans were made to present plays in January at a theatre to be built at the Little Mountain base of operations. This was done partly in fulfilment

²¹ *Province*, 13 Aug. 1947.

of the arrangement Risk had made in the course of getting the use of the university building: Everyman was to provide "entertainment . . . for 300 families in their Little Mountain emergency housing project. . . ." ²² It had been in response to this undertaking that the company received free use of a former service garage, a storeroom, and a barracks. The garage was used for set building, and the barracks as living quarters — about four or five of the company lived there. The store room was to be converted into a theatre, but — after a few shelves were removed — the plan was abandoned because of lack of time and funds. Also — and this was to be a perennial Everyman problem — the location of the proposed theatre building was poor: Little Mountain was a distant five miles from downtown Vancouver. The company nonetheless mounted a third production to add to the repertoire: their first children's play, *Little Red Riding Hood*, by well known American specialist in children's theatre, Charlotte Chorpenning. By spring all three were on tour.

By the third season the company was more directly involved in "educational" theatre. Opening with a play for young audiences — Chorpenning's *The Emperor's New Clothes* — it was also relying more and more on the assistance of the university. Risk had originally directed *Emperor* at the summer school of the theatre at UBC, and when the Everyman production of the play opened in late October at the Tecumseh School Auditorium, he used the same sets and costumes and even many of the cast. Again, only three plays — *Emperor*, *Arms and the Man*, and *Little Red Riding Hood* were performed this season, and, once more, schools and community auditoriums around the lower half of British Columbia provided the 'theatres'.

The same pattern generally governed the fourth season. Along, however, with the Chorpenning children's plays and *Arms and the Man* an extremely well received production of Andre Obey's *Noah* was presented. This, indeed, turned out to mark the beginning of yet another phase in the company's history. In February 1950 the company entered the play in the B.C. regional drama festival, took first place, and became one of the eight drama groups to play at the Dominion Drama Festival finals in Calgary in May. The achievement made headlines in the Vancouver papers and allowed the company to articulate its aims, one of which, it now appeared, was to present plays — such as *Noah* — "not ordinarily performed commercially for the public. . . ." ²³

²² *Province*, 27 Aug. 1947.

²³ *Province*, 18 Feb. 1950.

Even more importantly, this rise to prominence was followed by a move to a building closer to downtown Vancouver, a development which finally permitted Everyman to assume the status of a full-fledged repertory theatre. Dominion Drama Festival adjudicator Maxwell Wray's January jibe that it was "nonsense"²⁴ for Vancouver to be without a repertory drama company was outdated within a year of his making it. The building, to be sure, was no more than a second-storey former dance hall over a grocery store on Main Street, then being used as the rehearsal space of the Vancouver Opera Theatre. The fact, nonetheless, that Everyman got the space — and the assistance and co-operation of the Opera Company itself — permitted Risk to organize what he later described as Everyman's finest seasons.²⁵ With the infusion of new talent from the Opera Theatre, with the challenge of finally opening its own theatre and with plans for a large series of plays, the Everyman embarked on its most ambitious season to date. The enthusiastic company helped to construct a proscenium and a ceiling loft to store scenery after performances, and risers were built and chairs scrounged to seat the audience.

One reason for the renewed energy was the addition of Joy Coghill, who had returned to her native Vancouver after studying children's theatre under Chorpenning at the Goodman theatre in Chicago. Appointed a co-director, she pitched in to help along with everyone else: "We did everything: we answered the phone, we swept, we did the PR, we sewed the costumes, we painted the scenery, we acted. . . ."²⁶

The Everyman Theatre opened in January 1951 and immediately became an important institution for adults as well as children. The fifteen-week season included eight productions, five adults' and three children's. The 17 January opening of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, with Joy Coghill as Mrs. Alving, signalled the company's serious aspirations: "It [*Ghosts*] was a declaration of a mandate that only the best theatre would be done."²⁷ *Ghosts* received good reviews — it was, proclaimed the *Vancouver Sun*, "a sterling performance"²⁸ — and soon built to capacity houses. It alternated with Benjamin Kaye's comedy *The Curtain Rises*, with weekend matinées for children of Chorpenning's *Little Red Riding Hood*. On

²⁴ *Province*, 20 Jan. 1950.

²⁵ Risk interview, see note 6.

²⁶ Joy Coghill, speech given to conference of the Association for Canadian Theatre History, UBC, May 1983.

²⁷ Joy Coghill, telephone interview, 2 May 1986.

²⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 20 Jan. 1951.

7 February the company opened Peter Ustinov's *The House of Regrets*, directed by Risk, and, in mid-March, Joy Coghill directed Everyman's biggest hit to date, the melodrama *Will the Mail Train Run Tonight?*, which utilized the entire company, along with nearly a dozen guest singers and actors. She also directed Sartre's *The Flies*, billed as a Canadian première, which opened in April. Other children's plays were *Red Riding Hood* and *Hansel and Gretel*. The second of these, written by company member Robin Terry, became so popular that its run was extended and another scheduled play, *King Midas and the Golden Touch*, had to be postponed until the next season. Performances ran from Wednesday through Saturday of each week. The permanent company, numbering fifteen and augmented occasionally by guests, resembled in some respects that of the halcyon first year at Gibsons Landing; here again was a young, highly energetic group of promising actors, a few of whom worked full time, "doing everything," in what was acknowledged to be an actors' company. Some of the core members, besides Risk and Coghill, were Peter Mannering, Myra Benson, John Milligan, and Ron Wilson. All were paid an equal share of the profits, which worked out to about \$25 per week. In repertory fashion, several plays were offered in rotation. If a play, like *Mail Train*, was a hit, it would remain longer in the repertory — and thus might run until late April; if a play drew poorly, it would be withdrawn. Each new production was guaranteed a minimum of approximately ten performances.

On Saturdays there were training sessions: Joy Coghill gave speech lessons and Dorothy Somerset directed movement classes. Most productions drew good audiences. Critical reception for the season was generally excellent. Coghill summed it up by characterizing the company in the studio years as "original, young, vital — a theatre of some importance."²⁹

This year was notable, too, in that two former Everyman members, Thor Arnglim and Stuart Baker (whom the Vancouver *Province* labelled the "gold dust twins of the theatre"³⁰), mounted the first season of Totem summer theatre, a professional company working outdoors in Ambleside Park in West Vancouver. This company imitated Everyman in the desire to bring quality professional theatre to Vancouver; unlike Everyman, however, it was not afraid to admit to being "commercial." It presented light fare such as *Tony Draws a Horse*, by Lesley Storm, although in several of its biggest hits — Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named*

²⁹ Coghill interview, see note 27.

³⁰ *Province*, 1 Aug. 1951.

Desire and his *Summer and Smoke* — it showed itself capable of serious work. Operating as a stock company, it thrived on long runs with actors being jobbed in for particular plays.

Although the Everyman company worked hard and had its best years on Main Street, it was by no means trouble free. Its choice of plays (it was, remembers a former director, Dorothy Davies, “rather intellectual, like a university theatre”³¹) limited its audience. *Mail Train* or *The House of Regrets* might draw full houses, but *Uncle Vanya* and *The Bat* did not. Its building was in an unattractive part of town, and, in fact, its location acted as a deterrent to some people. And it didn’t have much space. There were only ninety-nine seats, and almost no backstage or wing space.

The sixth season opened in October 1951 with Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral*, which immediately went into repertory with Giraudoux’s *Amphitryon 38*. Risk directed both and received good reviews, particularly *Murder* (“a brilliant presentation”³²). In March 1952 Molière’s *The Would-be Gentleman*, directed by Peter Mannering, opened in repertory with *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The Molière play proved extremely popular and was extended to a third week. Then Rinehart and Hopwood’s perennial mystery, *The Bat*, was performed to poor audiences, along with a revival of the ever popular *Mail Train* and a production of Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya* — which, like *The Bat*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, and *King Midas*, were presented for children. As an experiment, Risk introduced regular Friday evenings of ballet presented by the Vancouver Ballet Production Club under the direction of Mara McBirney. The first of these opened on 26 October with a programme of dance to the music of Weber.

If, however, all was going reasonably well in the area of production, difficulties were once again looming in the matter of space. The building was to be torn down, because of its deteriorating condition, and the company would need to vacate. Again, Risk was left looking for a home for Everyman. He found one; but it was at the price of an arrangement that, as events were to prove, altered the very heart and soul of the company. Striking a deal with businessmen Izzy Walters and Charlie Nelson, proprietors of Vancouver’s State Theatre, Risk agreed to aid in renovating the building in exchange for low rent and some form of financial investment in his company. But the “deal” — the full details of which may

³¹ Dorothy Davies, personal interview, 3 April 1986.

³² *Sun*, 20 Oct. 1951.

never be known — was made unilaterally and in secret. Indeed, the image of closed doors still haunts former company members.³³

The change was noticeable on the day the company members were called to a meeting at which the new businessmen backers were present. Here the actors learned of the arrangements for moving into the State Theatre — to be renamed the Avon. The atmosphere of Risk's close-knit, co-operative repertory company was nowhere in evidence. "The company," recalls one of those present, "was 'told' how things would be — there was a different tone, it wasn't the way Sydney spoke."³⁴ It did get a larger theatre, a wider stage, better washrooms, dressing rooms and even a scene shop, but even here there were difficulties — the sheer size of the 800-seat theatre meant that an intimate involvement of audience with actors was impossible. Runs now replaced the repertory system. Most distressing, however, was the change in atmosphere. An exclusive group made decisions behind closed doors:

We hardly saw Syd, except at rehearsals . . . we performed [but] we didn't discuss afterwards. Before, we'd go over our parts, critique, and we'd do little bits on the side — we gave each other a lot of help, we were close knit. Now things were entirely different. At the Avon we didn't feel responsible.³⁵

"Stars" now began to be sought after as a means of bringing audiences into the cavernous Avon. The company was to become truly "professional" — or, rather, "commercial." There would be contracts, and good, regular salaries. *Macbeth* was chosen as the opening performance in September, and, the *Province* told its readers, it "featured American actor, Dean Goodman, in the title role, with outstanding local stage and radio personality Dorothy Davies as Lady Macbeth."³⁶ The formula worked: the production played to "packed houses," and at the conclusion of its two-week run it was announced that Goodman would remain with the company "on a permanent basis," and that another "star" would be added: "Through Mr. Goodman, negotiations are now proceeding with an outstanding feminine star of the Broadway stage, who is expected to appear with the Everyman company within a few months."³⁷ This was Zazu Pitts. Her portrayal of Abby the maid in Sidney Howard's *The*

³³ Jean Gibbons, with Sheila MacKenzie, personal interview, 4 April 1986. Both were members of Everyman during the studio and early Avon years.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Province*, 27 Sept. 1952.

³⁷ *Province*, 4 Oct. 1952.

Late Christopher Bean received “warm support from the public and press”³⁸ and was held over for a second week.

There were other prominent personalities as well. *The Importance of Being Earnest* opened on 13 October for a one-week run featuring the young English actor Richard Litt. The pattern was set: each time a play was announced the words “starring” or “personality” were used. On 3 November a double bill of Christopher Fry’s *A Phoenix Too Frequent* and Kurt Weill’s *Down In The Valley* opened with local “personalities.” In December, Shaw’s *Androcles and the Lion* and *Little Women* did the same.

But the houses had been steadily declining that fall. The “packed houses” of *Macbeth* turned out to be hard to repeat, especially with slighter works like *Little Women* as the draw. One of the programmes for the season talked bravely of the company’s “enlarging the scope of its activities,”³⁹ but with the “stars” and the large casts needed for shows like *Down in the Valley* — which required a full orchestra — costs were much higher than before. There was, moreover, serious competition from Totem Theatre, which, no longer merely a summer theatre, was selling out its production of *Summer and Smoke* that fall. Despite the promises made by Risk’s new associates, many salaries were paid late or only in part. And, according to former members interviewed, factions formed around some of the “stars.” It became a divided company. Discouraged, some of Risk’s original members left it for good.

What, however, did most to bring the company to grief was its production of *Tobacco Road*. Jack Kirkland’s 1933 adaptation of Erskine Caldwell’s steamy novel had opened in New York in the same year, and, despite some protests, enjoyed a lengthy run — surpassing 3,000 performances. Risk, mildly interested, passed the script on to Dorothy Davies, now one of Everyman’s directors. She considered the play “old-fashioned” but nonetheless found the idea of company members playing certain roles exciting. Risk himself was moved mainly by the play’s money-making potential. “I think,” Davies recalls him saying, “this will help us recoup money.”⁴⁰ Thanks largely to Risk’s urging, the play went into rehearsal with Davies as director. There was no special fear that the work might be too controversial — in fact the director worried that her production might not bring out the play’s more sensational side:

³⁸ *Province*, 25 Oct. 1952.

³⁹ Everyman Repertory Company, Programme for *A Phoenix Too Frequent* and *Down in the Valley*.

⁴⁰ Davies interview.

I personally was afraid that I might be too prissy for such a show, and I watched out that I didn't hold back on what the story was about and what it said. I was very conscious that we were talking about poverty, that we were talking about a ghastly, depressed situation that people can get into and this is what we went after.⁴¹

To re-create the atmosphere of depression-era rural Georgia, an effective realistic setting, designed by David Jones, was constructed. Actors made up in the coal bin of the theatre, while peat moss covered the entire stage floor.

At first the production went well. Advertised as "adult entertainment only," the play opened 7 January 1953 to "one of the largest first crowds in the history of Everyman Repertory Company's Avon Theatre season." *Province* critic Norman Sedawie found the performances "among the best yet seen at Everyman" and the direction, by Dorothy Davies, "sensitive and yet reserved, considering the material."⁴² Cast member Ted Babcock thought it the "best production done at the Avon theatre."⁴³ It played without incident for another week. Then, on Thursday, 15 January, all began to come apart. City prosecutor Gordon Scott issued a warning to Everyman either to "clean up" *Tobacco Road* or face closure by the police. An "unnamed citizen" had made a telephone complaint; detectives had visited the Wednesday evening performance; they reported the work "lewd and filthy"⁴⁴; and, based on this report, the city prosecutor had issued his warning. The same day Risk, his company manager Douglas Haskins, and representatives from other Vancouver theatre groups met with Vancouver's mayor Fred Hume and Scott to protest the police order. Both parties remained adamant: Risk felt that the company had been given no guidelines on how to "clean up," while the city officials felt obliged to support their police officers. The Thursday performance went on as usual, and again detectives from the morality squad were in the audience. On Friday the police warned the company that the play, if performed that evening, would be "interrupted" during the first intermission and arrests would be made. Risk, undaunted, decided to go ahead. "Everyman," he told the night's audience,

has always stood for a better kind of theatre in Vancouver and Western Canada at large. *Tobacco Road* is a modern classic. We were told either to clean it up or be charged. We were never given the opportunity to clean it

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Province*, 9 Jan. 1953.

⁴³ Michael Eastman (Ted Babcock), telephone interview, 16 May 1986.

⁴⁴ *Province*, 14 Feb. 1953.

up. They said it would make no difference if we cleaned it up, that we would be charged anyway.⁴⁵

An effort was made to forestall police action and, should it occur anyway, guarantee that it received maximum publicity. There were no curtains — changes of act were signalled with a brief lowering of the lights — and technicians and newspaper and radio reporters were invited backstage, where two police officers were waiting (having sent for reinforcements) for a convenient moment to arrest the actors. Just before the conclusion of Act Two, while the capacity audience was booing and chanting “Gestapo,” and while — by prearranged plan — all the stage and auditorium lighting were brought up full, detectives walked onstage and arrested five actors. Taken to the police station, they were charged with participating in an indecent performance under section 208 of the Criminal Code.

The audience, invited by Dorothy Davies to remain while bail was posted and the actors returned to complete the performance, watched impromptu entertainment provided by pianist John Emerson and actor Bruno Gerussi, who told stories. After two hours the actors returned and, marching triumphantly down the aisles — to Risk’s objection — completed the performance. Next day Everyman obtained an injunction to prevent further police raids during the litigation proceedings — and again that evening the performance took place, unchanged except for the lack of Ellie May’s “abbreviated red dress,” confiscated by the police as evidence. By now, the play was a *cause célèbre*:

... since the police entered the field of drama criticism almost everyone in town wants to get into the act. A spokesman for the box office which handles ticket sales reported a long line-up this morning stretching out onto the street at Kelley’s. And the theatre couldn’t be contacted at all, their telephone was busy continuously all morning.⁴⁶

At the same time, however, three more summonses were issued, these to Charles Nelson, theatre lessee, Dorothy Davies, play director, and Sydney Risk, producer. There were several court appearances: during one Dorothy Davies made an impassioned two-hour defence of the play and of the Everyman production of it; at another Erskine Caldwell himself testified that, after witnessing a special performance, he could pronounce the Everyman version a faithful production. The 13 February decision

⁴⁵ Vancouver *News Herald*, 17 Jan. 1953.

⁴⁶ *Province*, 19 January 1953.

was not, however, a positive one: "Magistrate W. W. B. McInnes," reported the *Province*,

ruled Friday that the Vancouver production of "Tobacco Road" undoubtedly catered to the lower instincts of the vast majority of those in the audience and therefore was indecent, immoral and obscene.

Five members of the Everyman Theatre cast and director Dorothy Davies were fined the maximum of \$20 or 10 days in prison; theatre operator Charles Nelson was fined \$50 or 20 days; and producer Sydney Risk was acquitted on a technicality.⁴⁷

Within four days, after a public fund was initiated to assist an appeal, a county court judge reversed the conviction. Morality, he said, was "a matter of opinion" and he preferred to heed that of the defence witnesses, many of whom he found to be highly respected members of the community. The city prosecutor appealed in his turn, but only as a "test case" against one of the company. This action was successful, and, in May, the B.C. Court of Appeal reimposed conviction on Douglas Hellier.

During the court case, Everyman continued with its season. *Tobacco Road* was taken on tour to Victoria, then Seattle, with Bruno Gerussi now playing Skeeter. In Victoria there was formal opposition from the Catholic Women's League and the production at the York Theatre lost money. Changes were made in the production, in consequence of which Dorothy Davies resigned. In Seattle the production received poor notices and poor audiences, and plans for an extended tour down the American coast were abandoned. The regular schedule, however, continued as planned. *Hamlet*, Moss Hart's *Light Up the Sky*, John Patrick's *The Hasty Heart*, and Jerome K. Jerome's *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* were offered to generally appreciative Vancouver audiences. But the ongoing complications of *Tobacco Road* exacerbated company problems. Besides the stresses of the litigation, which lasted until May 1953, there was the pressure of working with businessmen. Risk, in particular, felt the company less and less under his control, and this, along with its mounting debts, led him to conclude the 1952-53 season by withdrawing himself and the name "Everyman" — for which he owned the copyright — from the Avon Theatre: "I was dealing," he later recalled,

with a very commercially minded publicity man: between him [Charles Nelson] and Fred Hill [Everyman publicity manager] it was just hopeless. They did their best to make the most of it . . . people seemed to believe that

⁴⁷ *Province*, 14 February 1953.

— and even in the press it was intimated, that this was the smartest bit of publicity that had ever been perpetrated in Vancouver to get the crowds in.⁴⁸

Some of the Everyman performers did remain with the company, now renamed “Avon,” and under the artistic direction of Dorothy Davies. It ran one more season and then disbanded. In January 1955 the building was offered for sale.

The collapse of Everyman, it seems clear, grew at least in part out of the cultural immaturity of the Vancouver community. Too many elements in that community were simply too conservative, too unwilling to experiment, and too prone to an excessive commercialism. Equally, however, the fact that the company could exist at all is a clear indication that Vancouver, like the rest of the country, had something of the “genuine desire for the drama” that the Massey Commission had noted.⁴⁹ Certainly debate in the press over the *Tobacco Road* production was overwhelmingly in support of it, and, by implication, of the general aims and objectives of the company. An editorial in the *Province* advised that city aldermen “shouldn’t get mixed up in entertainment censorship.”⁵⁰ A flood of letters to the editor — which finally had to be stopped “owing to lack of space” — were greatly in favour of *Tobacco Road*. One of these, entitled “Cultural Immaturity,” presented the police raid as an interruption in the city’s growth toward “cosmopolitanism”:

Surely a city of this size, in the second half of the 20th century, is to be allowed the necessary freedom to reproduce on its stages the works of playwrights who in intellectual development, sensitivity and emotional maturity are obviously far-removed from whoever instigated this soap-opera raid!⁵¹

Quite apart from the question of community support, the mere existence of the theatre had done much to enhance the prospects for a more mature cultural life in Vancouver. It became, in fact, Risk remembered, “the kind of theatre which, if it had existed when I was starting out, I would not perhaps have had to go so far from my own country to get experience and earn a living.”⁵² Salaries may have been low, especially in the early years, but actors had the opportunity to work in a company that was young, energetic, and, most important, professional when no other com-

⁴⁸ Sydney Risk, interviewed by Peter Mannering, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, n.d.

⁴⁹ *Report: Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951* (Ottawa: 1951), 195.

⁵⁰ *Province*, 23 Jan. 1953.

⁵¹ *Province*, 24 Jan. 1953.

⁵² Everyman program for the 1947 four-province tour.

pany in the west had these characteristics. Risk, too, encouraged a seriousness, an attention to standards and a dedication to a career in the theatre which gave those around him a sense that they had a kind of calling. This, moreover, was all done on a co-operative basis: since there were no stars, everyone was on an equal footing and therefore had a greater chance to learn and develop. Many actors, like Joy Coghill, "had my apprenticeship in the Everyman theatre"⁵³ — among them Ted Follows, Arthur Hill, Myra Benson, Peter Mannering, and Bruno Gerussi. The list in fact is a long one, and even today the stage and the radio-television communities contain no small number of former Everyman actors.

Part of Risk's legacy, too, derived from the fact that the Everyman provided a stimulus for the emergence of other groups. Both the Totem Theatre (founded 1951) and Holiday Children's Theatre (1953) were established by members of his company, and each of them in its turn did much to stimulate theatrical activity in the lower Mainland.

Little, unfortunately, can be said of Risk's contribution in the way of dramatic innovation. Aside from programme notes, he left virtually no writings; and his production work reveals few unusual concepts or theories at work. Even though he wrote his master's thesis on representational versus presentational theatre, he made few experiments in staging, preferring to design his productions within the traditional "distancing" offered by proscenium production and by "style." He seems not to have picked up the open staging techniques of Tyrone Guthrie, nor did he display any particular religio-mythic vision of the drama, as Guthrie did in his best work. Indeed, his choice of plays reveals no special quality of either intellect or passion; and there is no one production of his that stands out as a milestone of interpretation or vigorous innovation. Everyman's best productions, in fact — *Tobacco Road*, *The Flies* — were directed by others — Dorothy Davies and Joy Coghill. And while many of his play choices were good, Risk was also capable of selecting *The Bat* and *Little Women* — hardly ideal works of the modern repertory theatre.

He was, however, very much of the school that allowed the actor plenty of room to be creative and grow naturally into a part.

"He left you alone," remembers Dorothy Davies, "he gave you a lot of freedom to do what you were doing. He watched you like a hawk and had extensive and interesting notes to give you. I think a lot of people had worked with Sydney who would never have got near a theatre except that he was so open to let people do their own thing."⁵⁴

⁵³ Joy Coghill, speech to ACTH.

⁵⁴ Davies interview.

In the end, then, it was his capacity to inspire those around him with a sense of what the theatre might do both for them and for the community of which they were a part that distinguishes him. Not a particularly imaginative director, hardly an accomplished businessman, he nonetheless contributed importantly to the theatre history of Vancouver and British Columbia generally. In that sense, what Coghill remembers as his quality of "extraordinary vision" served him, his company, and his community well.