

# Timms tour reveals theatre history

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News Writer

Larry Clark was amazed when he first arrived at the University of Alberta's Timms Centre for the Arts. A theatre with a backstage space of its magnitude not only sets a high standard for students to live up to, but the facilities also allow students to feel the closeness of performing that is so conducive to learning, especially in the final preparations leading up to the Centre's next show, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*.

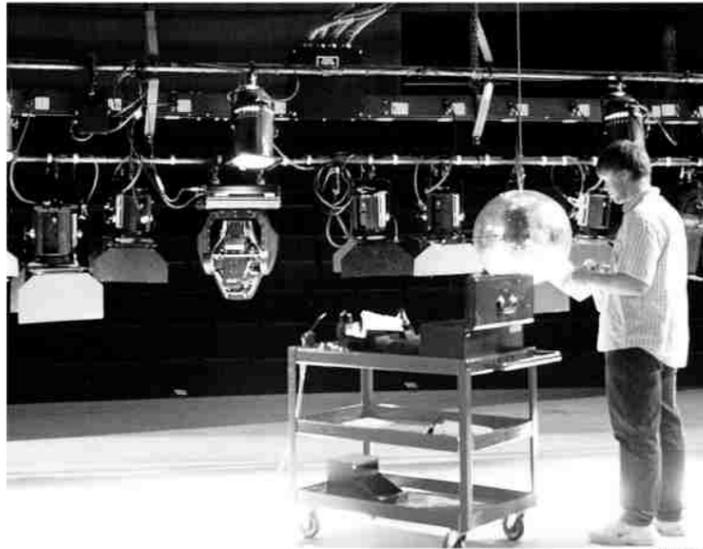
The Timms Centre is a spectacular building both inside and out, explained Clark, the Department of Drama's technical director, who also moonlights as a tour guide. The facility is unique compared to other theatres in its academic purpose.

"It is run by academic schedules of the students, more than the theatre season," Clark said, but also noted he doesn't mind the extra time necessary to get a show up and running.

"It is about the journey," he explained.

The Timms Centre was opened in 1995 — extremely fortunate considering this was on the tail end of the last recession. Around the time this building opened, several other theatres were substantially cutting costs, if not closing their doors. Clark noted how the facility is world class in many ways, with more backstage space and a bigger production booth than most "professional" theatres. The facility is perfect for teaching and allows six professional-level productions to be put on annually.

Clark spoke very fondly of the production booth and its possibilities. The



LISA LIN

**THE SOUND OF SILENCE** The Timms Centre stage sits ready for its next opening.

area, built to be a teaching space, is far larger than a standard booth, accommodating upwards of 30 people if necessary, whereas most booth spaces accommodate three.

"[We want students to have] enough experience to succeed at the professional level," Clark said.

To do this, performers must not only learn to act, but to act professionally.

"[The level of professionalism] of the performers needs to meet the level of facility they are given. Here we develop a great work ethic; they learn their [craft] but also learn to sweep up after themselves, literally."

At the Timms Centre, it's apparent that, while performers play an integral role, the behind-the-scenes crew is the lifeline of the theatre. The stock room, a room literally the size of a lecture theatre, is filled with clothes, all catalogued

and ordered, complete with a shoes room the size of a student apartment.

Without the students who design the sets and the props, and without the full time staff who catalogue, sew, and occasionally build life-size swans out of wire and pool noodles, it's clear that the productions would never get off the ground. In fact, the set design and technology end of the theatre is a large area of study for many students.

Working with the theatre has given Clark many fond memories, but he still recalls what ran through his mind when he first gazed out into its seats.

"Did somebody miss something? We are about 12,000 seats short," he said. "[But that's fine] because the goal [of the theatre] is to be an academic space [...] to make this the most effective it was important to keep the environment intimate."

# Old payment agreements could be altered by policy

GSA • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"We have to work really hard to find the excess money, which could be as much as \$8,500 a year. It takes a lot of effort to get past those maximum pay levels so that every student is advantaged to the maximum degree that we can," Forbes said.

Hector De la Hoz Siegler, president of the Chemical and Materials Engineering Graduate Students' Association, said that some students have approached his group with concerns.

"There have been sort of mixed reactions: some people are OK with the new structure, some people are a little angry about that," De la Hoz Siegler said. "The group of people that have really high value scholarships are those that really get affected by this policy."

De la Hoz Siegler said that his concern is for current students who already have been receiving income over the cap because of previous payment agreements.

"If, before coming here, they talk to their supervisors, and let's say they agree on something, but it was just a conversation, and they agree 'I'm going to get this payment plus any scholarship I make,' and they make their decision to come here based on that — this could be a change to their common-law contract," he said.

De la Hoz Siegler also expressed concern that this policy could make the department less attractive to incoming scholarship students.

"My concern is that that can [deter] those students that get scholarships to not come to the department, because at other universities, they can get more money. So there is some potential to affect the top students," he said.

Even after bringing these concerns to the department, De la Hoz Siegler says that for this year, nothing much can be

done; but, if there are any substantial changes to enrolment, he says the department did say they may review the policy next year.

Dan Manolescu, vice president of labour relations in the U of A's Graduate Students' Association (GSA), stated that the Engineering department's policy adheres to the association's collective agreement.

"We have a collective agreement, and as long as their maximum [amount of funding] is above our minimum, we have no problem," he said.

Manolescu also said that the GSA would move to ensure that no grandfathering now occurs. He echoed De la Hoz Siegler's concern that if a student chooses the U of A because of a specific rationale, their program should remain the same throughout their studies.

**"The only feedback I've gotten from students has been thanking us for increasing the minimum support levels to more livable standards."**

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