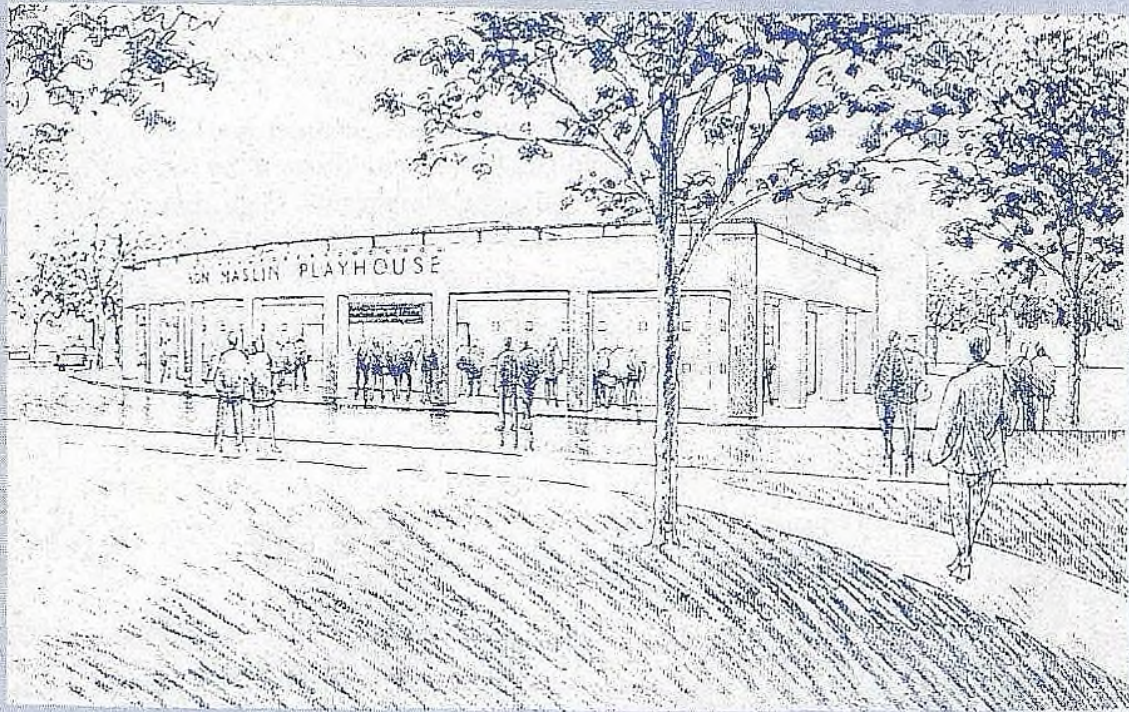




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*28th Season
1996 - 1997*



*First Season
in the
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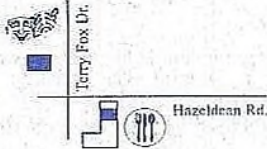
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ORIGINAL ART BY KANATA ARTISTS

Playhouse a tribute to the power of positive thinking

Theatres, you understand, cost bucks. Bucks to build, to maintain, to run. Big bucks.

So in a fiscal climate marked by the chill of closings and cuts, and fearful forward glances, the opening of a new theatre is nothing less than an outrageous act of optimism.

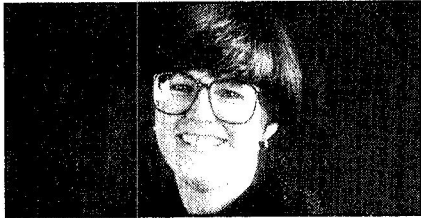
Raise a cheer, then, for the outrageous optimists at Kanata Theatre, the community group that has turned itself inside out getting the new Ron Maslin Playhouse up and running.

The \$1.6-million theatre facility opened for business last Wednesday with the group's final play of the season, a production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

It was a good community production, certainly — James Russell's Algernon a foppish delight and dragon-Lady Bracknell nicely handled by the eponymous Doreen Boss — but the biggest artistic achievement of the evening was not confined to the stage.

The biggest achievement lay in the impressive little building itself — and in the fact that a terrific community idea actually found itself transformed into reality. It did not happen through mere wishes and prayers, however.

An informative tour of the facility after the performance by Kanata Theatre president Barrie Kirk made it clear that an awe-inspiring proportion of volunteer labor has gone into project — everything from refinishing the second-hand seats purchased from an



Janice Kennedy
ARTCETERA/THEATRE

off-Broadway theatre (saving \$25,000, according to Kirk), to getting a donated Meridian phone system from Northern Telecom, to some extremely impressive fund-raising efforts.

The federal and provincial governments contributed \$1 million through the Canada/Ontario Infrastructure Works program; the City of Kanata lent enthusiastic backing and didn't have to spend a single tax dollar; and Kanata Theatre fund raisers put together \$560,000 — in spite of today's pervasive mood of tight-fistedness.

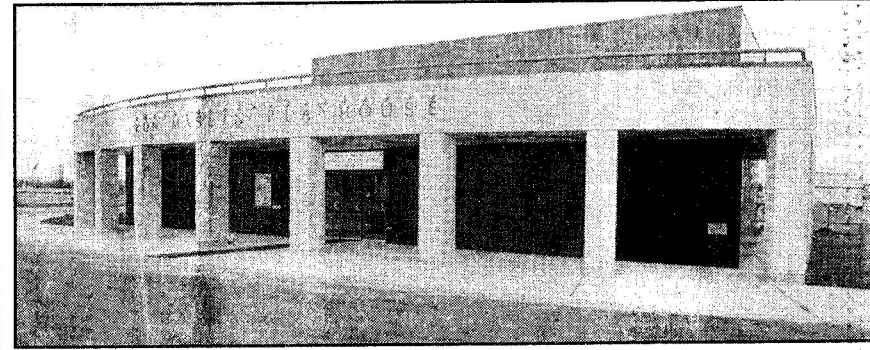
Deep in the western suburbs, The Ron Maslin Playhouse is in Kanata's Walter Baker Park off Terry Fox Drive. Named for a dedicated member of the 28-year-old company who died in 1992, it is a modern, clean-looking building with impressive architectural lineage, designed by Peter Smith, best known in theatre circles for his creation of David and Ed Mirvish's lovely Princess of Wales Theatre in Toronto.

That is not to say there isn't a substantial distance between the Toronto theatre (where Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is now playing) and its Kanata cousin. The former provides nothing less than a sumptuous theatregoing experience, and the latter, frankly, is pretty utilitarian — even though wonderfully liberating for the community group after the rehearsal and performance constraints of Earl of March Secondary School auditorium, their home for the past 26 seasons.

Still, what's noteworthy about Smith's Kanata variation is that the important basics, and some of the frills, are so good.

The 350-seat space, gently curved and emphasizing breadth rather than depth, provides unimpeded sightlines. The acoustics are both clear and reasonably resonant, though Kirk tells me that somewhere down the road they'll be adding moveable curtaining at the upper level to make the sound even better and provide flexibility for musical vs. non-musical productions.

The stage has a generous depth to it, there are "Juliet balconies" (as in *Romeo and*) on either side and there's a sound-and-light trap in the wings — a darkened box that allows actors to make their entrances without the distraction of accompanying backstage light or hubbub. Modern computerized lighting, workshop space immediately backstage, a green room and the luxury of a functioning shower off the



— Citizen file photo

RON MASLIN PLAYHOUSE: The Kanata Theatre's new \$1.6-million facility isn't flashy, but its important basics are very good

dressing room complete the picture.

Kanata Theatre's new home is not palatial, mind you. The lobby is small and the outer side corridors leading to the performance space are claustrophobically narrow. The seats, despite their artistic heritage, are adequate but no wider or more comfortable than most. But there's an air about the place, with its grey and dusky rose tones, that is pleasant in a briskly efficient sort of way.

Add other fundamental patron comforts like wheelchair accessibility and space, sound loop capacity for the hearing impaired, and air conditioning (with units away from the performance area, to minimize the possibility of hum) (not to mention conveniences like free parking for 250 vehicles) and the formula becomes a winning one.

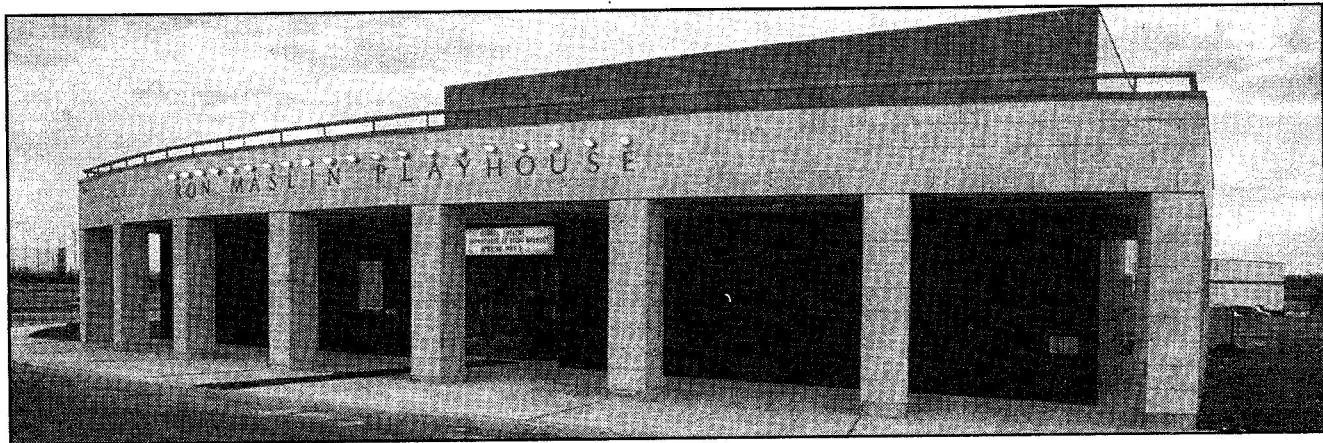
The signs are certainly good. Kanata Theatre has seen its subscriber base increase to 550 and is planning to start theatre classes for kids next year. They have also added an extra week of performances for each production and an extra play to next season — moving to 40 performances over all from 16.

It is a question, no doubt, of simply not knowing when to quit — which is just what you'd expect from those outrageous optimists of Kanata Theatre.

The Importance of Being Earnest continues at the Ron Maslin Playhouse tonight through Saturday. Tickets are \$6-\$12. Call 831-4435.

You can read this column, plus previous Kennedy columns, at the Ottawa Citizen Online, <http://www.ottawacitizen.com>

ENTERTAINMENT



—Citizen file photo

OFFICIAL OPENING: Ron Maslin Playhouse honors memory of a dedicated Kanata Theatre member

Kanata Theatre has a home to call its own

By Iris Winston
Citizen correspondent

Kanata Theatre celebrated one of the most dramatic moments in its 28-year history Wednesday with the official opening of its own building, the Ron Maslin Playhouse.

At a gala ceremony and ribbon-cutting attended by representatives of all three levels of government and three generations of the Maslin family, the \$1.9-million theatre was declared ready for its first production.

Construction of the 350-seat playhouse in Walter Baker Park began in June 1995. Two-thirds of the funding came from the federal-provincial infrastructure program, with Kanata Theatre providing \$560,000 and the city of Kanata donating the land. The amateur theatre group will manage the building, which will also be made available for community use.

The playhouse (named for the late Ron Maslin, one of Kanata Theatre's most longstanding and dedicated members) was designed by award-winning architect Peter Smith, who designed Toronto's Princess of Wales Theatre.

Commenting on the "tremendous collaborative process" that brought the project to fruition, Kanata Mayor Merle Nicholds congratulated all those involved and said the city of Kanata was "the big winner" in having a major new facility at no cost to taxpayers.

"This new theatre is a wonderful and vital addition to the city and a true reflection of what can be accomplished when three levels of government and the community work together," said Lanark-Carleton MP Ian Murray.

Kanata Theatre's first production in its new home, Oscar Wilde's *The Im-*

portance of Being Earnest, opens May 8. The troupe's 1996-1997 season will see five plays: *The Woman in Black*, adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from the book by Susan Hill (Nov. 20-30); *The Waltz of the Toreadors*, by Jean

Anouilh (Jan. 15-25, 1997); Norm Foster's *The Affections of May* (March 12-22, 1997); and *Happy Birthday*, by Marc Camoletti (May 14-24, 1997).

Ticket information is available from the box office, 831-4435.

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