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Statement

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE FLAGS FLY AT HALF-MAST IN HONOUR OF CANADIAN THEATRE ICON ROBIN PHILLIPS

July 27, 2015 – OTTAWA – It was with great sadness the National Arts Centre (NAC) has learned of the death of actor Robin Phillips, one of Canada's greatest English-language stage directors.

Robin Phillips, who was 73, was credited with revitalizing the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in the 1970s. Mr. Phillips received the 2010 Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement and was celebrated during a gala evening at the National Arts Centre – the same place he had made his debut years earlier, directing actors Martha Henry and the late William Hutt in a co-production of William Murrell's *New World* as part of the NAC's 1984-85 English Theatre season.

The NAC's flags will fly at half-mast this week in honour of Robin Phillips.

"Through his remarkable artistic vision and his elegant visual style, he set the highest standard for excellence in the performing arts... Theatre in Canada owes much to Robin Phillips," said Peter Herrndorf, President and CEO of the National Arts Centre. "Our sympathies go out to his family."

Biography

Robin Phillips was born in England in 1942. He studied acting at the Bristol Old Vic and worked with London's prestigious Royal Shakespeare Company (where, among others, he directed Helen Mirren and Patrick Stewart in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*) before moving to Canada in 1974.

As artistic director (1975-80) of the acclaimed Stratford Shakespeare Festival, he revitalized the organization, founded the Stratford Young Company as a first-class training ground for actors and directors, and earned international acclaim for Canadian artists. In his six seasons with the Festival he directed 35 productions, featuring such outstanding artists as Mrs. Henry and Mr. Hutt, as well as Brian Bedford, Maggie Smith, Jessica Tandy, and Colm Feore.

He was subsequently artistic director of The Grand Theatre, London (Ontario) (1983-84) and director general of Edmonton's Citadel Theatre (1990-95), and staged productions for major theatre companies across North America. In 1998 he helped establish Toronto's Soupepper Theatre Company and directed its first two productions.

Mr. Phillips' directing credits also include *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, starring Jessica Lange in London's West End; *The Marriage of Figaro* for the Canadian Opera Company; the film adaptation of Timothy Findley's novel *The Wars*; and the cult hit Broadway musical *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Before his death in 2007, this is how William Hutt described Mr. Phillips' contribution to theatre: "Through his directorial and teaching skills, through the sharpness and clarity of his perceptions, and through his innate gift of mentorship, he has made countless number of actors in our country better at their craft, surer of foot, and bolder in execution. He has enriched and prolonged faltering careers while encouraging the established to re-think, move beyond complacency, and take more daring chances."

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