



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Scotiabank Dance Centre: A Home for Dance

Scotiabank Dance Centre opened in 2001 in the heart of downtown Vancouver, a stunning \$11 million state-of-the-art project designed by Architectura in collaboration with the renowned Canadian architect Arthur Erickson, and a major development in the history of dance in Canada. It is believed to have been unique in North America at the time: a purpose-built, shared use facility, which provides a diverse dance community with a home of its own. Initiated and operated by the not-for-profit resource organization The Dance Centre, this major addition to the Canadian arts infrastructure welcomes thousands of people who take classes, rehearse, and attend performances and events. It is also a catalyst for new dance developments, spearheaded by new research, outreach and performance programs developed by The Dance Centre.

The History

In 1986, The Dance Centre originated a project to provide a creation centre for Vancouver's dance community, and secured Federal and Provincial government funds. The Dance Centre created The Dance Foundation in 1995, an independent not-for-profit society to fundraise for, construct and own the building now named after Scotiabank, which donated the site. Construction began in April 2000; on August 17, 2001, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson unveiled a plaque dedicating Scotiabank Dance Centre to the dance artists of Canada. On September 6, 2001 the building was officially opened by Bruce Birmingham, President of Scotiabank, at a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by hundreds of sponsors and donors. This was followed by Let's Dance!, a week-long festival in which thousands of spectators enjoyed performances, demonstrations, workshops, and spectacular aerial dances on the exterior.

The building has become a hub for dance activity, generating an estimated 85,000+ visits annually. The facility is also a popular venue with other art forms, however booking policies ensure that dance receives priority access and preferential rates. Each September, the building's anniversary is marked with public events at an Open House.

Facility Information

The 32,000 sq ft, seven storey, glass-enclosed building houses seven spacious studios, all with specially designed sprung floors and air conditioning, and all (except for the black-box Faris Family Studio) equipped with mirrors and barres, and flooded with natural light.

- The Mirna Zagar Studio, located on the seventh floor, measures 21 x 30 ft, with a sprung wooden floor and mirrors. The studio was dedicated to The Dance Centre's long-serving Executive Director by a generous donor in spring 2015.
- The Judith R Marcuse Studio, named after one of Vancouver's most eminent dance creators, is 25 x 32 ft and has a wooden floor suitable for tap and flamenco. Situated on the top floor, it opens out onto a rooftop patio.
- The Stephen A Jarislowsky Studio (named after the financier, journalist and philanthropist) and the Sharon Jandali Studio (dedicated to the memory of the late wife of Tarek Jandali, President of Seaside Paper Products), 35 x 40 ft each.
- The Bruce R Birmingham Studio (dedicated to Scotiabank's President) and the Earl Kraul & Grant Strate Studio (named in memory of the late Earl Kraul and Grant Strate, founding members of the National Ballet of Canada, and renowned teachers and advocates): 39 x 47 ft each.
- The Faris Family Studio is a 46 x 64 ft fully equipped studio theatre with retractable seating for 154, which also doubles a film/video production facility. The Faris family has been a strong supporter of the arts, and in particular of the facility, for many years.
- The building also has changing rooms with showers, a laundry, a dancers' lounge with kitchen facilities, and a physiotherapy clinic. Its administrative offices house The Dance Centre including its video library; Vancouver Ballet Society, with its library and archives, and Dance International magazine; and a number of other dance and arts companies and organizations.

Scotiabank Dance Centre provides more than a safe, well-equipped working environment for artists to create and perform: it has brought a new visibility and profile to the artform in the city. Mirna Zagar, Executive Director of The Dance Centre states that: "The facility brings the dance community closer together, enhancing collaboration between artists and contributing to building bridges between cultures and art forms. This synergy helps to open windows of opportunity to an art form whose infrastructure was neglected for far too long. With Scotiabank Dance Centre, Vancouver joined the cities of the world where dance is an equal partner in the cultural and economic environments."

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The operations of The Dance Centre are supported by the Government of Canada, Canada Council for the Arts, the Province of British Columbia, the BC Arts Council, and the City of Vancouver through the Office of Cultural Affairs.

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