

2022

## Ralph Rapson Traveling Study Award competition program



## THEATRE FOR TRUTH

### THE CHALLENGE

*“The word theatre comes from the Greeks. It means the seeing place. It is the place people come to **see** the truth about life and the social situation. The theatre is a spiritual and social X-ray of its time. The theatre was created to **tell** people the truth about life and the social situation.”*

- Stella Adler, American actress

### Part 1 The Current Stage

*“When did America become untethered from reality?”*

This question comprises the first sentence of *The Atlantic* essay titled, “How America Lost Its Mind.”<sup>1</sup> America, as well as the world today, is challenged to find truth on many fronts. “Some say” the world exists in a “post-truth” era<sup>2</sup>. In an age of “fake news” that disputes whether truth can be universalized beyond one's own personal experience, or the echo chamber of one's selection of social media, finding truth may necessarily be a comparative, communal act; a social discourse<sup>2</sup>. Ironically perhaps, the tether of reality may be examined in the make believe of the theatre. The design prompt for the 2022 Ralph Rapson Traveling Study Competition suggests that societally we need the performative aspects of show, tell, and play to pursue a shared perspective on truth.

1. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/how-america-lost-its-mind/534231/>
2. <https://theconversation.com/in-the-post-truth-era-documentary-theatre-searches-for-common-ground-104445>

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### Part 2 State of Theatre

*"The future of the performing arts will no longer be confined to the four walls of a theatre. Going forward, institutions must be poised to assume ever-expanding missions, and these will affect both the way they design new facilities and how they operate."*<sup>3</sup>

The assertion above from the article "Get Past the Lobby: Theatres Rethink How We Gather" in *American Theatre* hints that theatres today are reimagining the ways they gather and engage their communities. Competitors are asked to think expansively about theatre space as multivalent common space capable of a broad variety of performance interpretation, community engagement, and interaction that serves a broad, inclusive community within a stone's throw of the Minnesota State Capitol.

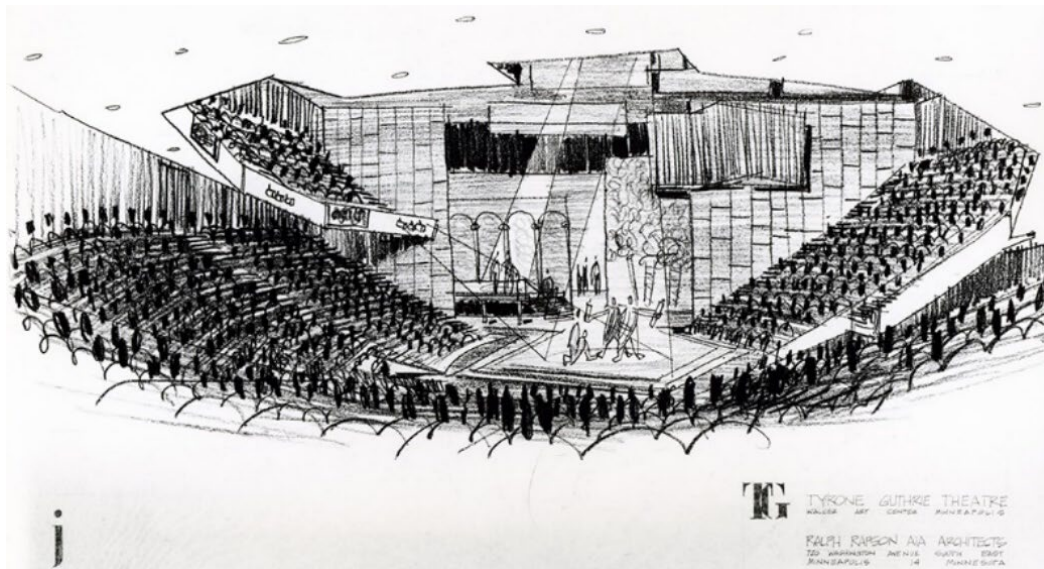
### Part 3 Rapson Legacy

*"That your own interpretation of a work of art is flagrantly subjective seems to be regarded as an arrogant attitude. But the truer view is that the interpretative artist can only make (their) own comment upon the work."*

- Sir Tyrone Guthrie, English theatrical director

The theatre as a program type was consistently re-examined throughout architect Ralph Rapson's design practice and creative arc – taking many forms – most notably:

- William and Mary Festival Theatre and Fine Arts Center competition (1938): an unbuilt collegiate competition teamed with Eero Saarinen and Frederic James while students at Cranbrook.
- Tyrone Guthrie Theatre (1963) with Sir Tyrone Guthrie and Tanya Moiseiwitsch.
- Rarig Center for Performing Arts (1971), on the University of Minnesota West Bank Campus.
- UC Santa Cruz Performing Arts Center (1971).



3. <https://www.americantheatre.org/2022/02/02/get-past-the-lobby-theatres-rethink-how-we-gather/>

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### THE PROGRAM

The 2022 Ralph Rapson Traveling Study Competition program is community commons and theatre space with supporting functions that competitors deem appropriate. The programmatic definition of theatre space and common space is kept intentionally open to interpretation to maximize each competitor's exploration of potential conceptual and architectural propositions.

#### ***Programmatic Areas***

- *Theater / Commons*
  - *Stage or Play space*
  - *Audience space*
  - *Rehearsal / Back of house support*
- *Media/making space*
  - *Sets and costume making*
  - *Visual arts creation*
  - *Gallery / installation space*
- *Meeting space*
- *Public facilities*
  - *Food service or concessions*
  - *Restrooms, service, and utility areas*

#### ***Exterior Areas***

- *Maximize outdoor public spaces and experience of site.*



Panorama south from site featuring overlook (left), St. Paul skyline and state capitol (center), and tree-lined allée (right).

### THE SITE

Cass Gilbert Memorial Park on a high point of land directly northeast of the Minnesota State Capitol overlooks downtown St. Paul. The proposed Theatre for Truth is not intended to supplant the park as much as serve as a major built program element within the park setting. As such, competitors are asked to preserve the existing mature allée of trees and to continue to celebrate the park's capitol city skyline overlook views. The existing concrete viewing platform may be demolished; competitors are encouraged to recognize and take advantage of the site's dramatic and challenging topographical features.



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### THE SITE (cont.)

Adjacent parking lots outside the site boundary are assumed to be sufficient for the program. Sherburne Avenue and existing parking within the project boundary may be retained or the land reconfigured as competitors wish. Pedestrian connections, visitor pick-up and drop-off, and production “in” and “out” service loading should all be accommodated.



Site context. Annotated map from source: <http://arcgis.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/mntopo/>



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Panorama southeast from corner of Sherburne Ave. and Cedar St. toward St. Paul skyline and tree-lined allée (right).



View north from Robert St. N. toward sloped site of Cass Gilbert Memorial Park and concrete overlook.



Panorama south from site featuring overlook (left), St. Paul downtown skyline, cathedral, and state capitol. LRT in foreground.

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### JUDGING CRITERIA

- *Response to program*
- *The design as it relates to the site and larger contextual concerns*
- *Degree of design skill and invention*
- *Attention to craft and detail as commensurate with the length of the competition*
- *Sustainable design concepts & conservation of resources*
- *Adherence to the submission guidelines and requirements*
- *Graphic skill*

### DESIGN EXPRESSION

The Ralph Rapson Traveling Study Award competition stresses the comprehensive quality of the overall design, character, and development of the proposed architecture and its site in the unique and thoughtful voice that each competitor brings to the design challenge.

### SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

No more than two (2) files may be submitted. Digital submissions must be equivalent to 20"x 30" in dimension in a landscape orientation. All submissions should be high-resolution JPEG format. File size should not exceed 10 MB per file. All boards must be labeled '2022 Ralph Rapson Traveling Study Award'.

A minimum of two perspectives is required as part of the presentation, including one overall project perspective. Other perspective sketches are at the option of the competitor. No additional digital information, links to web sites, etc. are allowed. In the tradition of the Ralph Rapson Traveling Study Award competition, hand drawing is always encouraged but is not mandatory.

The competition is **NOT** a team project. All works must be your own, and based on your personal study and/or research.

***All boards must be labeled 2022 Ralph Rapson Traveling Study Award.***