



# 11<sup>th</sup> OISTAT Theatre Architecture Competition at World Stage Design 2022

Design Brief: Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity - Shaw Amphitheatre



## INTRODUCTION

The OISTAT Theatre Architecture Competition is an international ideas competition, aimed at students and emerging architecture practitioners, and is organised by the Architecture Commission of OISTAT (International Organisation of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians). The winning entry is not intended to be built but cash prizes will be awarded and the best entries will be exhibited at the World Stage Design exhibit to be held in Calgary in August 2022. Terms and Conditions are provided in a separate document. The site for the competition is located at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, about 100 km to the west of Calgary. This document provides a design brief, which is to be read in conjunction with the Terms and Conditions and associated site drawings and photographs.

Banff Centre is interested in seeing innovative ideas for a structure(s) that could be built to provide the best use and highest value for an area of campus currently known as the Shaw Amphitheatre. This incredible piece of land boasts stunning views of the valley that holds the Banff town site nestled between iconic Cascade and Sulphur Mountains, and looking off onto stunning Mount Bourgeau in the distance.

### **How do we currently use the site?**

The Shaw Amphitheatre currently holds events in the open air in summer, typically live music concerts, with a capacity of 2000 persons, with space for 300-500 on the stepped concrete risers and standing space in front of the stage, and 1500 on the lawn behind. The capacity also corresponds to the space available in adjacent buildings to evacuate patrons, artists, and staff (before considering social distancing) in the event of severe weather or another emergency.

The current stage structure, which is erected each summer, is a Thomas Engineering truss roof with side wings to rig the left and right line array speakers, and a goal post style truss structure for front-of-house lighting. The stage structure sits on paving stones and a concrete pad that is level with the access road behind, which is a fire route and must be maintained in design proposals. Site setup in its current configuration takes approximately 2 weeks to complete.

### **Why doesn't the site work as it is?**

The Shaw Amphitheatre is an absolutely beautiful venue to see a live outdoor concert, provided you catch a show on the day when the weather is just right. Being situated in Canada's Rocky Mountains, there is a limited window of opportunity where reasonable conditions for outdoor performances exist. Banff is usually under snow from October to April. While winter has usually concluded, heavy rainfall can be expected through much of May and into early June. On the other side of summer, average temperatures usually begin to drop significantly in September.

*“We already know how to run the site for 6 weeks of the year.  
How would you develop this site to run for 10 months of the year?”*

The variability of weather conditions has been a challenge that has limited our ability to present certain types of performances at this site. Specifically, performances involving classical music (including opera) have been a challenge to present at this site owing to the risks posed to instruments by sudden drops in temperature and potential exposure to precipitation. These same hazards make it a challenge to feel confident in programming any dance programming at the site. Of the diverse artistic disciplines that Banff Centre engages with, the site is really only viable for commercial concert presentations. This suggests that the stage area should be fully protected from the weather, while a lightweight roof to protect the audience in summer would be welcome.

An additional challenge of the site in its current use is the large size of the staffing contingent required to safely operate a performance in this venue. This is in part due to the procedures that must be enacted to respond to severe weather events. Also with no fixed infrastructure for concessions on the site, all the necessary equipment must be manually setup for each event. Locations for bars and food concessions which can be connected to services (power, water and drainage) and removed in winter should be considered.

*If the site didn't require a complex evacuation process for typical severe weather events, then it would not require such a large staffing compliment.*

### **What are we looking for?**

Banff Centre is looking for ideas for the best use of the Shaw Amphitheatre site that would provide the best value to the organization. We do not want to place undue limitations on ideas that may be developed in this design competition, and accordingly only ask that the solutions developed:

- Capitalize on the natural beauty and stunning views of the site.
- Facilitate safe and efficient operation for at least 10 months of the year.
- This should include consideration for the safe deployment and removal of any temporary structural components.

- Maximize the potential for revenue generating opportunities by creating a flexible space that can support a diverse array of activity, including banquets of up to 400 attendees.
- Support facilities, including public washrooms, kitchens, and foyer space will be provided in the existing buildings adjacent to the site.
- Maximize the flexibility of the space to support arts performances and events from a wide array of disciplines in a variety of audience configurations and sizes.
- Performance types considered should include at a minimum: commercial music artists, classical ensembles, orchestra, theatre, opera, and dance.
- If possible, audience sizes should be able to range from 200 to 2000 – essentially retaining this capability from the current venue’s design, including the feeling that the venue isn’t too big when it is set for only 200 in a theatre configuration. It is envisaged that due to the climate challenges the venue will provide a secure indoor venue for smaller events in winter, but will transform into a larger partly open air venue in the summer months.
- Provide essential services for artist support such as dressing rooms (both single and choral/ensemble), washrooms, greenroom space, and kitchenette.
- No costs are required but the jury will favour proposals which are practical and realizable.

**In the current design a fire access road runs around the upstage side of the site, as shown in red below. This should be retained or extended if a larger site area is required.**



## CLIMATE CONSIDERATIONS

### Severe Weather

For all past outdoor programming in the Shaw Amphitheatre, Banff Centre has contracted a professional meteorologist to work on-site and assist in the identification of developing severe weather conditions that could impact the live safety of individuals attending the event. Primary weather considerations are lightning, strong winds, drastic changes in temperature, and heavy precipitation in the form of rain, hail, and snow (including in the summer months). When necessary, a performance may need to be suspended due to a severe weather event and the site evacuated. Evacuation details are specific to each event but generally have guests, artists, and staff hold in one of the adjacent buildings until conditions are safe to either resume the event or go home. Complete evacuation of the site can take as long as 25 minutes (depending on the crowd size, demographics, and other variable conditions of the event) so the advanced warnings provided by the meteorologist are critical to ensure evacuation is complete before the severe weather hazard is occurring.