

The construction of the historical "Ice Plant" began in 1926 as a storage facility for large blocks of ice intended for freight and for the cold storage needs of the Terminal Warehouse to be built next door. The project was designed to meet the growing demand for storage space for Toronto's developing harbour. When rail transportation was no longer the most effective way to deliver goods throughout the country, the building sat empty amidst a veritable no man's land of derelict industrial buildings awaiting its next incarnation.

In 1972, the Federal Government created a crown corporation with a mandate to revitalize 100 central acres of waterfront land stretching west from York Street to Stadium Road. Culture, education and recreation were the tools to be used to bring Torontonians back to their lake... and to bring visitors from across North America and around the globe. This was the beginning of Harbourfront Centre.

The same year, Canadian contralto Maureen Forrester and British theatre director Robin Philips were on a search for a potential rehearsal space for the Canadian Opera Company, when they came upon the ice-house facility. Breaking into song, Forrester was inspired by the extraordinary acoustics of the space. Philips, who was touring the ice house while looking for a Toronto home for the Stratford Festival, immediately recognized its potential as a performance venue. Both, quite independently, strongly urged it be transformed into a centre for the performing arts.

This began the building's association with the arts. Nicknamed the "Ice House", the Canadian Opera Company used the facility as a rehearsal hall and carpentry shop from 1979 to 1982. Harbourfront began using the Ice House as a raw performance space in 1983.

The creation of the theatre began in earnest in 1986, when du Maurier Ltd. generously provided a substantial grant for seating, dressing rooms, high quality sound and lighting equipment, and acoustical devices. The historical ice-storage facility, constructed in 1926, was re-designed by Peter Smith of Lett/Smith Architects and transformed into an exceptional and versatile 416-seat performance venue, and was dedicated as the du Maurier Theatre Centre on November 4, 1986.

In 1991, along with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications, du Maurier Ltd. provided an additional multi-million dollar gift to enhance the project. The final phase of renovations included the installation of a sophisticated heating, ventilation and air conditioning system to create a pleasurable year-round environment for both the performers and the public. The unique design features the construction of a sleek, three-story glass encasement that surrounds the entire north, east and west sides of the facility, providing acoustic insulation, additional lobby space, and an aesthetic external finish that preserves the integrity of this historical building.

The theatre was re-opened in February 1992, with a gala opening ceremony that included performances by Toronto Dance Theatre, Maureen Forrester, Brent Carver, and Jackie Richardson.

Revisions in tobacco sponsorship legislation resulted in a name change for the theatre in October of 2003, which coincided with some interior updates to the space with the addition of all new house seating and lobby carpeting. In November 2006, Harbourfront Centre entered into an exciting partnership with Enwave Energy Corporation, and announced a new name for the venue – the Enwave Theatre.

Harbourfront Centre partnered with Enwave to commission a large scale solar glass art installation as part of a retrofit of the glass roof and exterior lobby walls in 2012. The installation, *Waterglass*, by artist Sarah Hall, envelops the exterior of the building in a permanent artwork which also generates solar electricity for use in the theatre.

Today, the now-named **Harbourfront Centre Theatre** continues to be a waterfront showcase for music, theatre, dance, and performance art, and provides a unique facility for many international and local artistic groups.

"the [Harbourfront Centre Theatre] has some of the best acoustics south of the George Weston Recital Hall" – Toronto Star