



## The Dream Becomes a Reality

**“The river itself was what most charmed and amazed us. ...  
Eventually the Twin Cities will realize that their river can be,  
and ought to be, a wonderful life-giving amenity.”**

**Sir Tyrone Guthrie, *A New Theatre*, 1964**

Sir Tyrone's words proved to be prophetic and after a site on the banks of the Mississippi River was identified as the future home of the Guthrie, internationally-renowned French architect Jean Nouvel was commissioned to design a building to unite history with a fearless drive toward the future.

Nouvel places enormous importance on designing buildings harmonious with their sites and surroundings. Thus, the size, scale and history of the historic mills adjacent to the site directly influenced the design of the new Guthrie. Nouvel recognized immediately that in order to take full advantage of the magnificent views of the river, the main public gathering spaces must be high above ground level. One of the most prominent features of the building is a daring two-level cantilevered lobby reaching out toward the river, creating a stunning public gathering space. Located on Levels Four and Five, this “Endless Bridge” has sloped floors drawing visitors toward the river and ending with a stepped outdoor terrace overlooking St. Anthony Falls.

The exterior of the building is the color of the twilight sky at dusk, “*l'heure entre chiens et loups*,” meaning the hour that parts the dogs from the wolves. Nouvel considers this hour the liveliest within the theater as spectators rush to the plays and the actors begin their ritual of transfiguration. The play of natural light on images embedded on exterior walls provides a dramatic hint at the action unfolding within as day changes to night.

Nouvel's fascination with light and transparency continues in interior spaces. The windows on the Endless Bridge frame views and give focus to nearby historical landmarks. Images digitally printed on thin sheets of airmail paper cover the walls and ceilings, continuing the theme seen on the exterior. Nouvel considers these images to be layered memories of past Guthrie productions whose shadows can be seen as the guardians of the new space.

Today as yesterday, history and modernity are friends. In addition to being destined to become an architectural landmark, the new Guthrie, amid the mills, bridges and the mighty Mississippi River, is poised to become a clear historic marker representing the vitality and inventiveness of the region's theatrical culture.