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DARWIN THEATRE COMPANY

What: LOSS OF SOLE REHEARSAL SPACE FOR THEATRE IN DARWIN

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HISTORIC THEATRE COMPANY CUT ADRIFT

At the start of this, its forty-eighth year, Darwin Theatre Company is being pushed out of its current premises and left with nowhere to rehearse.

"It's hard to imagine what the NT government could be thinking of," said John du Feu, artistic director. "They have offered us offices but nowhere to create shows. It's like a doctor being offered a waiting-room with no surgery."

The company was asked in late January if it would consider a move back to Browns Mart. The company said it would if a proper rehearsal space could be provided there. However, by last week the company had been told that there would be no rehearsal space and that it would be forced to move anyway.

"It's not just for us," says du Feu. "Our rehearsal space is the only one in Darwin suitable for theatre. Lots of smaller companies and artists rely on us. Neither they nor we can afford to rent one ourselves."

The plan for the company's current rehearsal space which is at the Frog Hollow Centre for the Arts in McMinn St is to turn it into offices for the space-strapped Darwin Festival.

"We understand the problem, but the festival only needs this extended office space for a few months each year, while moving them to Frog Hollow will leave theatre companies struggling all year round. There has to be a better solution."

The company this week launched its 2007 program, an ambitious year-round showcase of Territory talent. Without proper resources there are concerns for the program's viability.

"Every established professional theatre company needs a rehearsal space," du Feu says. "It's where a theatre company's heart is - it's a minimum resource. It would be hard to stand by and see this Darwin institution - one of the oldest theatre companies in Australia - turned into a laughing stock by a misguided grab for the easy solution."

The company has now written to the Minister for the Arts and is awaiting for a response.