



Dunedin Theatre Network

CONCEPT FOR DISCUSSION: STAGE TWO

MAYFAIR
THEATRE

PLAYHOUSE
THEATRE
HOME OF DUNEDIN REPERTORY SOCIETY INC

ZEAL
ZEALAND

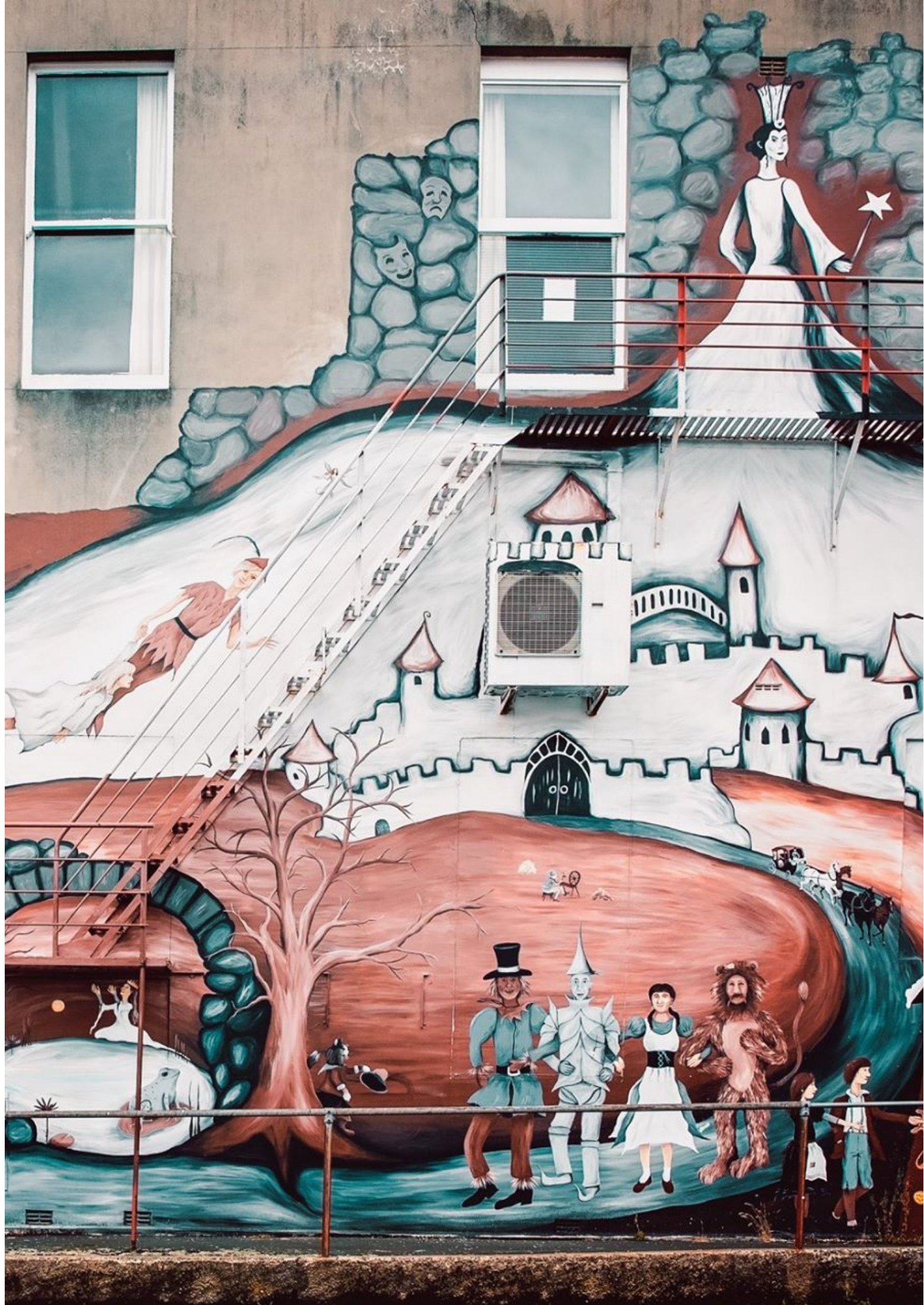


Photo credit: Kevin Hill
Mural: Filipa Crofskey

the IDEA IN A BIT MORE DETAIL

In May 2022 we proposed an idea of a “network approach” for Ōtepoti Dunedin’s theatre infrastructure.

We proposed a staged refurbishment of the Playhouse Theatre, the Athenaeum Building and the Mayfair Theatre.

We’ve spent the last few months developing the idea in more detail and engaging with the performing arts community.

We would now like to work with Dunedin City Council to take this community-led, collaborative idea to the next stage of development.

We would like to agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Council to take this forward, and to request Council funding for costed design options to enable future decision-making.

Ngā mihi,

Helen Scott (Project Chair)
Jemma Adams (President, Dunedin Repertory Society Inc)
Lawrie Forbes (Zeal Land Ltd – Owner, Athenaeum Building)
Geoff Patton (Chair, Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust)

www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
BACKGROUND	8
THE CONCEPT	11
THE PLAYHOUSE THEATRE	12
THE ATHENAEUM BUILDING	18
THE MAYFAIR THEATRE	24
OPERATIONS & OWNERSHIP	26
COSTS & FUNDING	27
ADVANTAGES OF A NETWORK APPROACH	28
DUNEDIN'S VENUE CONTEXT	29
ENGAGEMENT	30
NEXT STEPS	32
APPENDIX: FEEDBACK FROM PERFORMING ARTS COMMUNITY	





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dunedin Theatre Network concept is a collaborative, community-led proposal that has sprung up in the context of:

- Dunedin's well-documented need for performing arts venue infrastructure
- Dunedin City Council having set aside budget for this purpose
- three existing Dunedin arts venues that are deteriorating and at risk of closure without investment.

The owners of the Playhouse Theatre, the Athenaeum building and the Mayfair Theatre have been working together to consider how we can help with the shortage of fit-for-purpose, accessible and welcoming performing arts spaces in Ōtepoti Dunedin.

We first floated this idea with the community in April 2022 and have since been developing our thinking and engaging widely with the performing arts community.

This report presents where we've got to and invites Council to partner with us to further explore the idea's feasibility.

CONCEPT

We offer a network of venues well-suited to Dunedin's population size and creative vibrancy, all in heritage buildings.

We propose partnering with Council as a cornerstone investor, followed by other funders, to refurbish our venues over 6-8 years in a way that meets the city's needs.

With support to refurbish them, we envisage the following improvements:

Playhouse Theatre

- Intimate 110-30-seat character auditorium refurbished for accessibility and comfort.
- A new accessible entrance, a lift, additional toilets and more circulation space in the front of the building.

- Backstage area demolished and rebuilt to the height of the three-story street front building, providing room for storage and equipment at the rear of the building.
- Maintain a strong focus on children and young people, but the venue will also be suitable for festival performances, local and touring plays, small musicals, comedy, improv, and other performances.
- The large space upstairs can be used for food & beverage, rehearsals or as a further performance space.

Athenaeum Building

- Create a Centre for Creative Industries.
- Incorporate three black box/studio spaces of different sizes for performance or rehearsals, as well as a suite of supporting spaces like meeting rooms, a recording studio, cafes and bars.
- Most likely to be used for contemporary semi-professional and professional theatre, dance, comedy, festival performances and improv.
- Could also incorporate a new Centre for Writing to grow out of the historic Athenaeum & Mechanics Institute library.

Mayfair Theatre

- Retain a 400-seat end-on/proscenium arch theatre with an orchestra pit, with significantly improved accessibility, access and comfort.
- Ownership of the neighbouring building provides considerable flexibility and opportunities to explore the internal configuration and possibilities for supporting spaces.
- Most likely to be used for larger plays, touring productions, musicals, operas, dance, school productions and larger-scale community events.

After refurbishment, the three venues would collaborate and share resources to operate the venues. This would provide the best experience for hirers and audiences, while offering the most cost-effective operating model.

We believe our networked approach – as opposed to investing in a single venue – is the best way to serve as broad a range of producers, performers and audiences as possible.

ENGAGEMENT

We have held nearly 40 one-on-one meetings with performing arts sector organisations and individuals, as well as an excellent group workshop focussed specifically on professional theatre.

The collaborative and community-led nature of our proposal was received warmly, as was the opportunity simply to have the city's venue conversation move forward.

We observed strong support for looking after what we have as a city – or, put more bleakly, what we have left.

There was great interest, curiosity and excitement about our venues' potential with proper investment, and strong support for the concept to progress to the next stage of detail.

We promised to objectively portray the performing arts community's views, and we've done that in this report and its appendix.

COUNCIL SUPPORT

This is a huge project, and we can't do it – or fund it – alone. This concept envisages a partnership model in which Dunedin City Council would contribute cornerstone investment, based on the feedback we've had from other funders that financial support from our local authority will be critical.

We would therefore like to work closely with Council to develop the idea further. We propose agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between our organisations and Council to take this forward.

One of the next steps will be to understand exactly what is possible and how much it

will cost. This will require professional services advice from architects, engineers and quantity surveyors. We would like to request Council funding for this work, which we believe would cost approximately \$100,000.

If the project proves feasible, we envisage the capital cost being funded with Council cornerstone investment, supplemented with funding raised by our organisations from philanthropic, charitable, central government, private and community sources. The project would be spread over 6-8 years.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Investing in modern, fit-for-purpose performing arts infrastructure within three heritage buildings will have significant benefit for the city and contribute to social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

The community will have increased opportunities to produce, participate in and attend performing arts events. Having the "spaces to skite about" that Council's Ara Toi strategy imagines will significantly add to the city's cultural vibrancy, help develop our night-time economy, and enhance our reputation as a creative, literary and heritage destination.

CONCLUSION

The Dunedin Repertory Society, Zeal Land and the Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust own venues of great importance to the community, and which are capable of providing significantly more value.

They are, however, deteriorating and are unlikely to be able to be refurbished without financial support from Council.

Meanwhile, the city has a widely acknowledged shortage of performing arts venues.

We would like to partner with Council to explore the feasibility of refurbishing our buildings to meet the city's needs. We would like to agree an MoU with Council and request funding for costed design options.

We see this proposal as an opportunity for Council to partner with community organisations and other funders to create a uniquely Dunedin answer to the city's performing arts venue infrastructure needs.

BACKGROUND

In early 2022, the owners of the Playhouse Theatre, the Athenaeum building and the Mayfair Theatre met to compare notes on the common challenges of owning and operating ageing performing arts buildings and trying to refurbish them to ensure their continued viability.

We quickly realised that, put together as a package, our buildings offer an appealing mix of sizes, styles and locations – a mix appropriate for the size and creativity level of Dunedin. We agreed to explore the idea of partnering with Council and other funders to refurbish our venues as a network.

After putting this to the community by way of a submission to Dunedin City Council's 2022-2023 Annual Plan, we received sufficient positive feedback to continue developing the idea in more detail. This report is the result of that mahi.

CONTEXT

The discussion around Dunedin's performing arts venues has been well-documented:

- As early as 2012, the city was looking into Dunedin's theatre infrastructure needs.
- The closure of the Fortune Theatre in May 2018 resulted in the loss of a 220 seat venue, as well as its resident professional theatre company. It typically produced up to five shows per year and was a significant employer and anchor for the city's theatre industry.
- Following the closure of the Fortune, Dunedin City Council and Creative NZ commissioned a feasibility study into the city's performing arts sector, with an objective of identifying the best option for a mid-sized venue for the city. This work was completed in 2020.
- The following year, Dunedin City Council earmarked \$17.1 million in its 2021-2031 Long Term Plan for a performing arts venue, with the preferred site or project

yet to be determined. Expenditure was budgeted for financial years 2025-2028.

- Covid-19 has had a huge impact on the performing arts industry. While preparing this report, the performing arts community highlighted to us Covid-19's effects on their workforce, audience numbers, booking habits, venue hire costs and funding availability.

SCOPE OF THIS IDEA

As venue owners, we clearly understand our role in the theatre eco-system: bricks and mortar.

The scope of our work has therefore been to explore how our bricks-and-mortar venues could provide fit-for-purpose, accessible and welcoming physical infrastructure for performing arts in Dunedin.

There are other questions and challenges the performing arts community is working through, including what the future of professional theatre in the city looks like.

Neither bricks-and-mortar considerations nor the rejuvenation of the city's performing arts sector can – or should – be progressed in isolation from the other. There is a symbiotic relationship at play: venues need shows to be staged and enjoyed in them, and productions need places in which to be performed.

This was a key focus of our discussions with the performing arts community, particularly professional theatre makers, and has informed our early thinking about how our venues could be modernised. Continued engagement in this regard will be important.

The Playhouse, Athenaeum and Mayfair have teamed up for this project because we own the city's primary small and medium venues-for-hire, but the full network of Dunedin theatre venues is much wider. It includes treasures such as the Regent Theatre, the Globe Theatre and Allen Hall. We have been pleased to engage with them as we developed this report.

OUR APPROACH

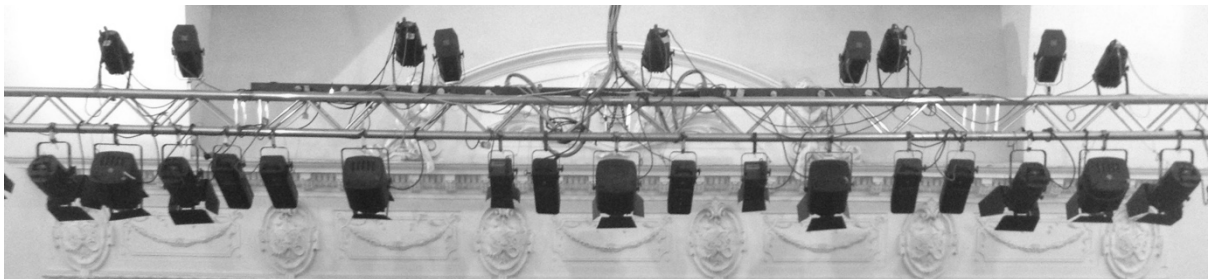
We started with the information we already hold. There is a reasonable body of professional services work on each venue – feasibility studies, early concept sketches, condition assessments and so on. We also looked at previously commissioned reports about the city’s performing arts infrastructure needs.

We built on this with broad and genuine engagement with the performing arts sector. We put a lot of energy into this, and members of the performing arts community were incredibly generous with their time, insights and expertise.

This kōrero has helped us flesh out design thinking for each of our venues and give more thought to how they could operate collaboratively in future. We’ve set our ideas out in the next section of this report.

We’ve also worked with Council management (including Policy, Property, Heritage and Ara Toi teams) as we developed this report.

Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain funding to progress as far as commissioning concept designs or QS estimates of refurbishment options, but we are pleased to have developed our idea in enough detail to support further consideration by Council and the community.



The Dunedin Repertory Society, Zeal Land and the Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust acknowledge the support of many in the community as we worked on this concept design. Thank you to all the individuals and groups that engaged with us, attended our hui, gave us professional advice, acted as sounding boards, or supported our endeavours in lots of other ways. Thank you also to Core Development for developing and hosting our website.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We set ourselves some principles as a group. We consider ourselves to be kaitiaki of venues that are important assets to the community. Therefore, we want our venues to be:

- **accessible** – in all senses of the word
- **affordable** – for a wide range of hirers from professional to amateur
- **available** – not exclusively hired by a resident company, but available to be booked by a wide range of organisations and individuals.

WHY INVEST IN PERFORMING ARTS?

Arts, culture and creativity are central to a thriving city. Investment in arts, culture, and creativity is an investment in people and communities, and their social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.

Arts and culture help to create vibrant towns and cities that people want to live, work and play in, and tourists want to visit. They foster a sense of belonging and community connection, and support positive physical and mental health outcomes.

As New Zealand's Core Cities research puts it, 'creative industries contribute to the buzz of a city, strengthen brand and identity, and attract talented workers.' This is most clearly demonstrated by evidence showing the creative industries are also growing more quickly than traditional industries.

Enterprise Dunedin estimated the city's arts and culture sector to have generated \$228 million of the city's GDP in 2019, with a sector growth rate more than twice that of total GDP growth in Dunedin.

In 2021, Creative NZ found 76% of Dunedin residents had engaged with the arts in the previous year, despite the impacts of Covid-19. Around two-thirds of Dunedin residents supported Council funding for the arts, compared to the national average of 54%.

We believe arts and culture need the same support as other community infrastructure such as transport and schools – particularly in a UNESCO City of Literature.

WHAT IS AT STAKE IN ŌTEPOTI DUNEDIN?

The city is already missing out on performing arts experiences and is at risk of losing more.

Our discussions confirmed several local performing arts organisations have stopped staging some or all their work in Dunedin, purely because of a lack of appropriate, up-to-scratch venues.

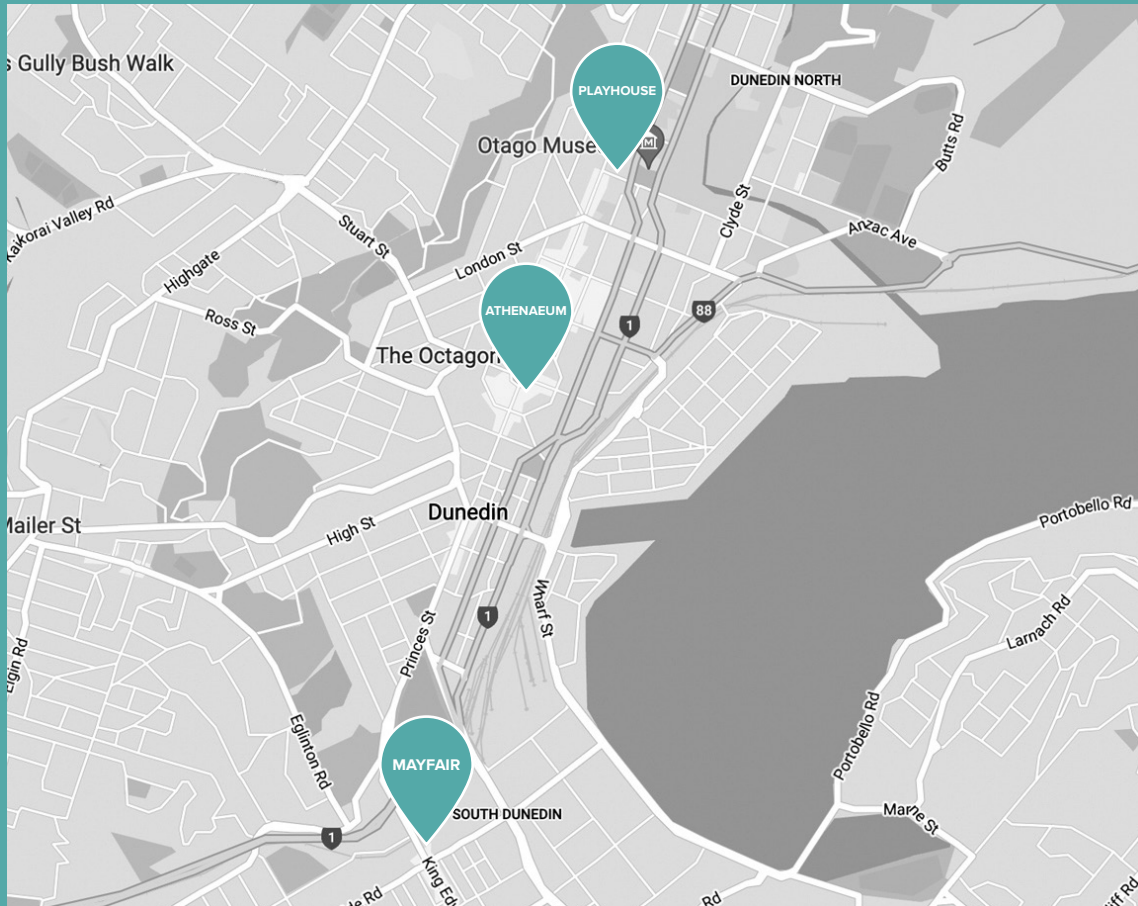
The lack of a suitable venue was a main driver in at least two professional touring organisations no longer touring to Dunedin.

Other organisations commented that they would no longer be able to stage performances if the venues we own were to close.

Our venues are deteriorating and are already on borrowed time. Without investment we anticipate they have only a few years before they will need to close. The closure of any one of our venues would be a devastating blow to the city's performing arts eco-system, which has already lost so much. The fact that they are three heritage buildings makes the case even more compelling.

Refurbished, our venues will be well-positioned to meet the needs of more local and touring performing arts organisations and to better serve audiences and the community.

the CONCEPT



PLAYHOUSE

130-seat auditorium
Social/F&B space above
Focus on children
& young people



ATHENAEUM

2-3 new performance studios
Athenaeum Library, to become
a new Centre for Writing
Suite of other rehearsal studios,
practice rooms, offices,
meeting rooms
Food & beverage



MAYFAIR

400-seat auditorium
Social/F&B space above
Offices, meeting room
Adjacent building offers other
opportunities to explore

PLAYHOUSE THEATRE

31 Albany Street, Dunedin North

www.playhousetheatre.co.nz

Owned by Dunedin Repertory Society Inc, a fully voluntary society with charitable status.



Our vision is to restore the Playhouse Theatre, retaining the character auditorium while modernising the facility and vastly improving accessibility and the experience and comfort of audiences, performers and crew.

The Children's Theatre would remain a fixture of the Playhouse, and the venue would also be suitable and available for hire for a larger range of other performances.

HISTORY

The building that now houses the Playhouse Theatre was initially an Oddfellows Hall, opened in 1876. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) was a friendly society that provided support and community for migrants to New Zealand. The building hosted the new migrant community to create new social connections and also held gatherings, concerts, balls and fundraisers.

The building was rented and eventually purchased by the Southern Comedy Players in the early 1960s – at that point, the only surviving professional theatre company in New Zealand. Bernard Esquilant and Bill Menlove of the Southern Comedy Players extended the hall to add the stage and backstage area, and built a mezzanine to create the raked auditorium we know today. They named the new theatre the Playhouse.

The Dunedin Repertory Society bought the Playhouse in the early 1970s.

CURRENT CONFIGURATION AND USE

The Playhouse remains largely the same since its theatre conversion in the 1960s. It comprises two buildings: the 1876 former lodge on the street-front, and the 1960s extension at the rear.

The former lodge building is three stories tall. It houses a box office and toilets in the foyer, a 136-seat raked auditorium, a large coffee lounge space and kitchen above, as well as several wardrobe and prop storage areas.

The 1960s extension to the rear houses the stage (where the roof has reasonable height above the stage) and the single-level backstage area. Backstage comprises a green room, three dressing rooms and further storage.

Today, the Playhouse is best known for the Dunedin Repertory Society's Children's Theatre, which stages productions each school holidays. These involve about 80-90 local young people annually as cast and crew members, and attract around 5,000 patrons per year (see page 16). The Society also presents adults' theatre productions.

In addition, the Playhouse is available as an affordable hire venue for theatre, music, comedy, improv and festival performances and film screenings.

The Playhouse's proximity to the tertiary education precinct offers good synergies for casts, crews and audiences..

HERITAGE STATUS

None, although likely to qualify for listing based on advice received to date – owners currently considering.

BUILDING CONDITION & CHALLENGES

The Playhouse is in moderate to poor condition, evidenced by:

- general ageing – the Playhouse is nearly 150 years old and has had few major upgrades
- a need for seismic strengthening, though it is not “earthquake prone”
- environmental challenges, i.e. cold and damp
- poor accessibility
- does not meet modern standards for public venues
- limited theatre rigging and technical equipment.

REMEDIAL WORKS & REFURBISHMENT PLANNING PROGRESS

- ✓ Building condition assessments, including general condition, plumbing, electrical, asbestos survey, roof, structural engineering (funded in part by the DCC / OCT Capability Building Fund) in December 2019
- ✓ New roof on the former lodge building in February 2021 (funded in part by the Dunedin Heritage Fund).
- ✓ Feasibility study completed in December 2021, including heritage assessment, site planning sketches, fire and accessibility reports, and significant community consultation (funded by Lotteries Community Facilities Fund).
- ✓ Conservation Plan currently underway (funded by Dunedin Heritage Fund).

WHAT MIGHT A REFURBISHED PLAYHOUSE LOOK LIKE?

Concept sketches completed as part of a feasibility study based on our community consultation, suggested remodelling the Playhouse as follows:

- Demolishing and rebuilding the 1960s extension (the stage and backstage area) with a similar footprint, but build to the same height as the three-storey street frontage. This would allow the tech equipment and all wardrobe and props storage to be accommodated within the new rear of the building.
- Internal reconfiguration of the main street-front (heritage) building, with the addition of a new accessible foyer entrance, lift and accessible toilets at ground level. The current curved staircase would be replaced.
- The auditorium would remain of a similar configuration, with an estimated capacity of 110-120 seats. The tech area would move to its traditional space behind the auditorium, and new toilets would be added to this level.
- The top floor would retain its open social space. A walkway above the stage would give access to the new rear building. There would be additional height above the stage.
- New fit-out (rigging, tech equipment, drapes, seating, heating etc)

COST ESTIMATE

A December 2021 QS estimate of the concept sketches described above put refurbishment costs at \$4.6 million.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

If funding cannot be achieved for the refurbishment outlined above, the Dunedin Repertory Society would make best efforts to make the building generally more comfortable for users for its remaining life.

However, the theatre would remain inaccessible to many members of the community and some health and safety concerns would remain unaddressed.

The Society anticipates it will become harder to attract volunteers willing to accept the obligations of governing the deteriorating building.

It is unfortunately likely that the Children’s Theatre would be wound up and the building closed or sold within 15 years.

PLAYHOUSE THEATRE

POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

The sketches below were developed as part of the Playhouse’s Feasibility Study. This was completed in 2021 and involved consultation with audiences, performers and hirers. The full size concept sketches are available to view at www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz

GROUND FLOOR

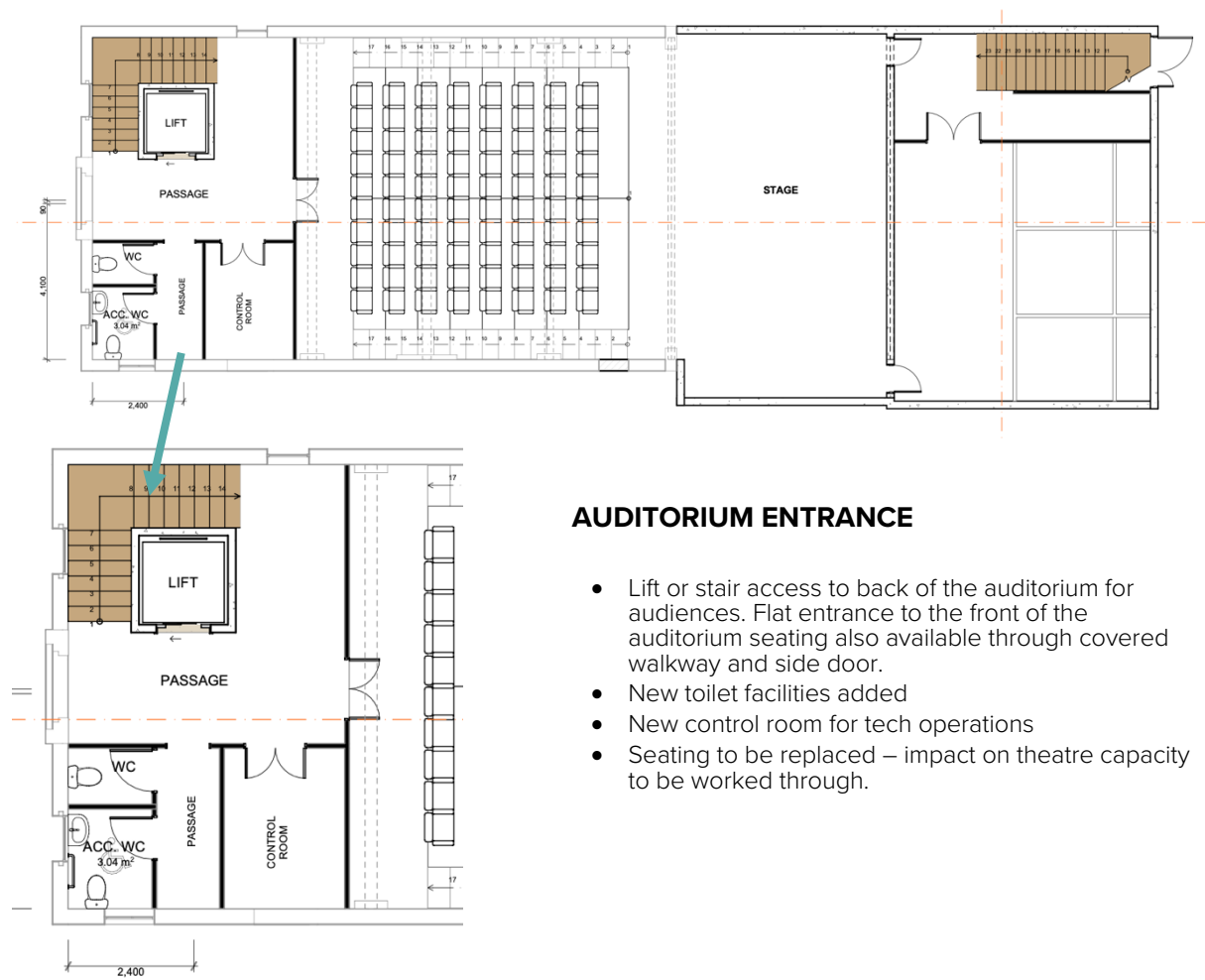


ENTRANCE

BACKSTAGE

- Dual entrances – existing front door opening to Albany Street, and new covered accessible entrance from the side
- Existing spiral staircase replaced with new, more manageable stairs and a lift
- New accessible toilet
- New ticket office
- Additional circulation/crush space in foyer
- New exit door through back wall to neighbouring car park (would be subject to permission), allows loading access and fire egress
- Floor plan similar to existing but with additional toilets (would seek to make one accessible at next stage of design)
- Adds stairs to upper floors (currently this part of the building is single level)
- The stage area itself would be rebuilt to approximately the same dimensions (but would have a higher ceiling)

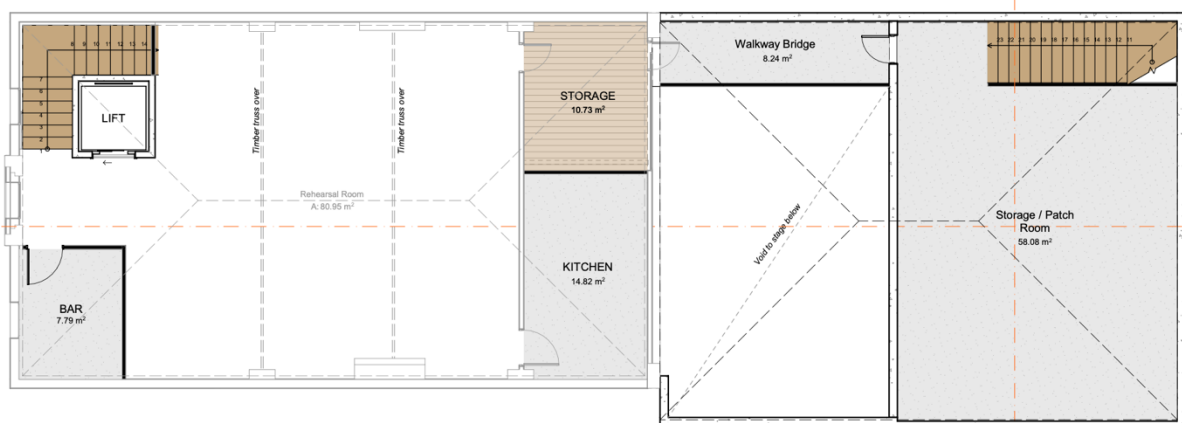
MIDDLE LEVEL



AUDITORIUM ENTRANCE

- Lift or stair access to back of the auditorium for audiences. Flat entrance to the front of the auditorium seating also available through covered walkway and side door.
- New toilet facilities added
- New control room for tech operations
- Seating to be replaced – impact on theatre capacity to be worked through.

TOP LEVEL



SOCIAL SPACE AND UPPER BACKSTAGE AREA

- Lift or stair access to coffee bar / social space
- Floor plan similar to existing, retains large light social space
- New walkway bridge over the stage area connects to backstage area, with an upper floor in the backstage area providing storage. Additional ceiling height above stage adds technical production options.

DUNEDIN REP. SOCIETY CHILDREN'S THEATRE

The Playhouse Theatre is best known to many for its school holiday children's theatre productions, which have been running for over fifty years.

The Children's Theatre is community arts at its best – benefitting those who perform, and those who attend, with volunteered time and donated resources keeping costs and other barriers to participation very low.

Each term a cast of 20-25 young people aged from about 10 years old to about 20 years old rehearse three times per week in preparation for their school holiday season. They then spend the first week of their holidays at the Playhouse, performing a season of 15 shows over nine days.

Playhouse kids develop their drama, music and movement skills in a real working theatre with a real paying audience. They build confidence, develop team skills and discipline, learn social skills and make life-long friends. We are proud of the inclusive and supportive atmosphere the Playhouse whānau have built for themselves.

The production crew is also predominantly rangatahi. We typically have teenagers operating the sound and lighting desk, and recent alumni often stage manage, usher, help in the coffee bar, or design and paint sets. There is a variety of skills our young people can learn depending on their interests.

Best of all, it's free to participate. We ask cast to join the Society (\$10 per year), but

beyond that there are no fees, no uniforms and no gear required.

This is possible because all of the supporting work is volunteered and we have a wealth of costumes and props that have been handmade for us by volunteers over many decades. We estimate approximately 500 volunteer hours go into each production.

Playhouse shows are typically attended by children aged 3-10 years old and their families. It's often children's first experience of live performance, and they are fully engaged in the performance. They heckle, laugh and interact with the performers. They love the tradition of coming up on stage to meet the characters at the end. It's hard to say who has a better time at the Playhouse – the cast and crew or the audiences.

Coming to the Playhouse is a traditional school holiday activity for many Dunedin whānau. We see lots of second generation audience members – often with grandparents who are excited to share the Playhouse magic with little people all over again. We also enjoy welcoming groups from early childhood centres and groups of adult audience members from care facilities.

We typically sell around 5,000 tickets across our three children's productions each year. At \$8 per seat, it's one of the most affordable live performance opportunities for young audiences.



There are several reasons the Playhouse Theatre works so well as a venue for the children's theatre:

- Its stage comfortably fits 20-25 young people, an ideal cast size.
- The auditorium capacity of 135 seats is small enough to feel intimate, and for little audiences members not to feel lost, but big enough to allow large numbers of audience through each term.
- The auditorium's shape and raked seating mean everyone gets a good view. Small audience members can see over the heads in front of them, and there are no pillars or corners to obstruct the view.
- It's a great learning theatre – the auditorium size challenges casts to project their voices, but it is a manageable challenge. A larger venue would not be feasible for developing voices and would likely be intimidating for a first time on stage.
- A proscenium arch theatre style is a great learning space for younger casts, crews and audiences. There is a clear delineation between stage and audience, and casts and crews get to learn foundation skills of traditional theatre layout and equipment. It's also a great basis for simple and affordable sets.

The coffee bar above the theatre provides helpful half time circulation space. It's also a place to go if audience members need to slip out during a performance to tend to their babies or small children.

The Children's Theatre depends on having a suitable venue from which to operate, and there are no other Dunedin venues that meet this need as well as the Playhouse, for the reasons listed above.

Support for the Children's Theatre, and for the Playhouse as the ideal venue for it, was loud and clear in our engagement for this concept, and in our 2021 feasibility study consultation.



ATHENAEUM

23/24 The Octagon, Dunedin

Owned by Zeal Land Ltd / Lawrie Forbes

Includes spaces currently leased by:

- The New Athenaeum Theatre
<https://newathenaeumtheatre.com>
- The Athenaeum & Mechanics Institute
<https://www.dunedinathenaeum.org.nz/>



Our vision is to create a series of vibrant, welcoming, multicultural spaces in the very heart of Dunedin city.

The venue would contain a showcase of the very best that Ōtepoti's creative industries have to offer, in a building that has cultivated Dunedin's creative talents for over 150 years. The concept echoes performing arts hubs in other cities, including the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne and TAPAC in Auckland, as well as the new Te Atamira arts space in Queenstown.

This idea has been developed as part of a joint feasibility project between Zeal Land and the Committee of the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute, and is sympathetic to the heritage status of the building itself.

HISTORY

The Dunedin Mechanics' Institute started in 1851, followed swiftly by the Dunedin Athenaeum in 1859. The success of both institutions led to development on their current site in 1870, creating the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute. The Dunedin Athenaeum Institute is oldest of its type still to be in operation.

The original Mechanics' Institute was one of Dunedin's first public spaces and, as such, the first home of the Otago Provincial Council and the Dunedin Town Board. The Institute also played host to meetings which led to the establishment of the University of Otago.

The new building provided space for various reading rooms and library spaces, and held regular lectures, evening classes and social events or 'conversazione'. Over the years, it has also hosted the Dunedin Mutual Improvement Society, the Otago Cine Club, the Fortune Theatre and the Dunedin Fringe Festival.

CURRENT CONFIGURATION AND USE

The building is approximately 2,000m² across three floors. Current tenants include the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute, the New Athenaeum Theatre, aha design collective and the Craic bar.

The significant footprint of the Athenaeum building is rivalled only by the neighbouring Regent Theatre and Burns House in the southern half of the Octagon. Its narrow street presence and tiny blue door belies the expansive and elegant former library within.

Today only a small proportion of the building is used. The Athenaeum Institute now only uses a single library room, while the New Athenaeum Theatre operates a 70-seat performance space to the rear of the building. There are also two hospitality outlets which face onto the Octagon.

HERITAGE STATUS

The Dunedin Athenaeum is a Category 1 registered building. It is also protected in the District Plan and by a covenant with Heritage New Zealand.

BUILDING CONDITION AND CHALLENGES

- The Athenaeum is 150 years old and has had no significant upgrades.
- Seismic strengthening work is required.
- The building needs to be brought up to modern standards throughout, including electrical, plumbing, decorative work, etc.
- Poor accessibility. At least one lift, potentially two, is required to improve access and circulation.
- Delivery access to the front and the rear of the building. Currently, deliveries for the café and bar on the Octagon are through the front door. The driveway that links the building to the rear accessway of the Regent Theatre is for fire egress only.
- Fire egress needs to be addressed through design as the building is constrained on three of its four sides. A recent fire report suggested that the building can be used by up to 1000 people if an adequate sprinkler system is installed.

REMEDIAL WORKS & REFURBISHMENT PLANNING ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

- ✓ Ongoing repair work to roofs, gutters and downpipes throughout
- ✓ Feasibility study completed June 2021, (funded by the Dunedin Heritage Fund), which included heritage assessment work, site planning sketches, a fire report and community consultation work.
- ✓ Funding secured for a Conservation Plan, to be completed in 2023 (funded by the Dunedin Heritage Fund).
- ✓ A detailed seismic assessment has placed the building as being 25% of NBS at Importance Level 2. A seismic strengthening solution has already been developed.
- ✓ A recent asbestos survey has shown there to be minimal contamination.

WHAT MIGHT A REFURBISHED ATHENAEUM LOOK LIKE?

The proposal is to create a multi-use Centre for Creative Industries in the building, including:

- a newly-created National Centre for Writing which could be a hub for Dunedin's UNESCO City of Literature activities and a celebration of our literary heritage (read more on page 21).
- three contemporary performance studio spaces:
 - Studio 1: >200 seat performance studio space of approx. 286m², located on the upper ground floor
 - Studio 2: >150 seat performance studio space of approx. 185m², located on the lower ground floor
 - Studio 3: >100 seat performance studio space of approx. 128m², located on the lower ground floor.

Each performance studio would be serviced by changing and tech spaces, along with ceiling grid systems for drapes and lighting.

- a multi-studio recording suite, set below ground for great recording quality.
- flexible, hireable meeting rooms and office spaces to support productions, meeting and events.
- space for two bars (one in the Octagon plus a rooftop bar) and on-site catering, as well as potential for a small bookshop and/or exhibition space in the Octagon.
- the main office hub for the Dunedin Theatre Network.

COST ESTIMATE

An estimate in July 2021 put the cost of redevelopment at approximately \$12 million, including fit out costs for performance spaces.

ATHENAEUM

POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

The sketches below were originally developed as part of the 2021 Athenaeum Feasibility Study and were adjusted as we engaged with the performing arts community (particularly professional theatre practitioners) on this concept. Larger versions of the sketches are available to view at www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz



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|--|------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| | PERFORMANCE STUDIO | | CIRCULATION CRUSH SPACE (INCL LIFTS) | | CENTRE FOR WRITING |
| | TOILETS | | STORAGE/ TECH/ CHANGING | | RECORDING SUITE |
| | FIRE EGRESS/ LOADING | | OUTDOOR HOSPITALITY AREA | | FRONT OF HOUSE/ SHOP |
| | OFFICE & MEETING SUITE | | F&B SPACE | | |



Lower ground area – potential space for conversion to performance or rehearsal studios

CONCEPT FOR NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING



The Dunedin Athenaeum & Mechanics Institute – tenants in the Athenaeum building originally named for their organisation – aspire to develop a National Centre for Writing in their library space within a refurbished Athenaeum building.

The National Centre for Writing could become a hub for Dunedin's UNESCO City of Literature activities and a focal point for the city as a literary destination, as the Institute sets out below.

This proposal offers a unique opportunity for Dunedin City to honour its magnificent literary and creative heritage and celebrate its City of Literature status within the UNESCO Creative Cities network. The recently published Destination Otepoti report commissioned by Enterprise Dunedin states "...with its long history associated with literature, art, museums, film and design, Dunedin needs to be more strongly recognised as one of New Zealand's most creative cities...'

A National Centre for Writing housed within the Athenaeum and accessible to both locals and visitors will lead the charge in building Dunedin's brand as a creative city. Imagine a place where Aotearoa New Zealand writers can gather to hone their craft, to learn from each other.

Imagine a place where video game developers, screenwriters, novelists and playwrights can bring their shared experience and knowledge to mentor future generations in their creative craft. Imagine a place where children can learn about creative writing and experience the joy of telling our stories in a unique, purpose-built environment.

The opportunities for creative collaboration in a dedicated space are limitless. With our arts festivals, our students, our small businesses and our wealth of creative people, a spectacular showcase celebrating our literary and creative past, present and future is not only possible but arguably essential for the city's wellbeing.



Athenaeum Library – potential site of new National Centre for Writing

NEW ATHENAEUM THEATRE



The New Athenaeum Theatre (NAT) occupies a space on the ground floor of the Athenaeum building, in the former Otago Cinema Club space.

The NAT is an example of a community-led, affordable, available space contributing positively to the city's performing arts eco-system. The NAT's usage also illustrates the demand from producers and audiences for a flexible black box space in a central location, which is a key aspect of the vision for a refurbished Athenaeum.

The Dunedin Collaborative Theatre Trust, which operates the New Athenaeum Theatre, was established in 2016 by a group of theatre practitioners who saw the need for a flexible, open-access, independent performance venue in Ōtepoti Dunedin. As well as providing a venue for local and touring companies and artists, another of the Trust's primary goals is to support new ventures and emerging practitioners, creating new theatre and performance opportunities.

The theatre is now 'home' to four associate companies that reflect some of the diverse array of performance in Ōtepoti Dunedin – dance, theatre, children's drama classes, and improv. Additionally, the NAT hosts independent shows from musicians, poets, comedians and more, all on an as-needed basis. By ensuring a venue is available when artists need it, at affordable rates, the NAT's offerings continue to expand along with its community.



MAYFAIR THEATRE

100 King Edward Street, South Dunedin

www.mayfairtheatre.co.nz

Owned by Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust, a registered and incorporated charity



The Mayfair Theatre envisages a refurbishment that preserves the theatre's mid-size capacity and grand proscenium arch auditorium, modernising it to ensure a great experience for all its users.

The adjoining building, also owned by the Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust, offers significant flexibility in planning a refurbishment.

HISTORY

The building opened in 1914 as the 840 seat King Edward Picture Theatre. It is one of the oldest, purpose-built movie theatres remaining in New Zealand.

In the mid 1920s, "talkies" became popular and the theatre underwent a modernisation, replacing some of Edwardian features with its current deco style. At this point, the building's name changed to the Mayfair Theatre.

Once television started to take over from the movies, many theatres gradually closed, and so it was with the Mayfair in the mid 1960s.

The Dunedin Opera Company then purchased the building and redeveloped it into a 400 seat live theatre, bringing the circle down to meet a newly constructed orchestra pit, and the original Edwardian proscenium off the back wall to form the stage. Dressing rooms were formed in the old stalls.

In the early 1990s, the adjacent building was purchased to allow for set and wardrobe areas.

In 2014, the Dunedin Opera Company sold the complex to the Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust.

CURRENT CONFIGURATION AND USE

The 400 seat auditorium has a traditional proscenium arch, and the orchestra pit can be covered with an apron if not required.

Below the stage there are two chorus dressing rooms and six smaller dressing rooms.

The building beside the theatre (named Mayfair House) contains a large scenery store at the eastern end, while the remainder of the building is currently leased out. This building offers good possibilities in a redevelopment.

The theatre is used by a variety of local hirers, including Opera Otago, Otago Scouts, Taieri Musical, Musical Theatre Dunedin, the Dunedin Arts Festival and several schools. Touring performers include singers, comedians, dancers, psychics and actors.

A normal year would see 1,000 performers and crew staging productions seen by over 10,000 audience members.

HERITAGE STATUS

The Mayfair Theatre is a Category 2 registered building.

BUILDING CONDITION AND CHALLENGES

- General ageing – the Mayfair is 108 years old and has had few major upgrades
- Although it has a high rating in terms of the current code and is not “earthquake prone”, it needs a small amount of seismic strengthening
- Requires a new roof
- Poor accessibility
- New toilet facilities are required for patrons
- Poor access for packing in scenery

REMEDIAL WORKS & REFURBISHMENT PLANNING ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

- ✓ Feasibility study completed by Octa included heritage assessment, fire and accessibility reports
- ✓ Conservation Plan completed by Origin Consulting
- ✓ Asbestos survey completed and remediation/removal costs ascertained
- ✓ Concept sketches for a new foyer layout, a passenger lift and new toilet facilities have been created by Origin Consulting

WHAT MIGHT A REFURBISHED MAYFAIR LOOK LIKE?

The Mayfair’s refurbishment designs are at a relatively early stage, with significant scope for input from the performing arts community – particularly in relation to the auditorium’s supporting spaces and the adjoining building.

The Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust’s work to date envisages:

- refurbishing the public areas, retaining their historical features
- adding street level access, and access to the stage house from the adjoining building.
- installing a passenger lift to provide access to the foyer, intermediate and top landings of the stairwell, and the function room
- installing new toilets in the old stalls area
- improving the heating system and general comfort of the venue
- addressing compliance issues.

Engagement for this project identified some potential uses for the adjoining building to consider – a workshop / set building space, a redesigned entrance and/or social space, rehearsal space, and others.

COST ESTIMATE

Costs are difficult to estimate, given designs are at an early stage. This report uses an estimate of \$21.5 million, based on a 2017 feasibility study plus an inflation allowance and an estimate of fit-out costs based on % of build costs.



OPERATIONS & OWNERSHIP

OPERATING MODEL

If the Playhouse, Athenaeum and Mayfair were to be refurbished, the operation of the three venues would need to look quite different from today.

We anticipate refurbishment would result in significantly more hire usage, which would need to be managed capably and professionally.

At this conceptual stage of the project, we haven't sought to define what that model should look like. But all three venue owners acknowledge that it will make sense to share resources across the three venues to help them operate as efficiently as possible, and to give hirers and audiences a great experience.

At its lightest and lowest cost, this might be a single staff member managing the calendars and hire bookings for all three venues, and maintaining a database of audience members to engage with directly about events. This could be supplemented with a pool of technicians, ushers and fire wardens – volunteer or professional – called in on a casual basis to service hires.

Through the course of our engagement, we heard several other ideas and experiences of venue management that could be explored further. These typically involved being more active in attracting hires (and/or ticket sales) and providing a greater level of service for those hires. For example, shared resource could offer ticketing and marketing, or – favoured by some – artistic direction or programme curation.

It's too early to determine the right model or how it could be funded. But venue owners can confirm we're committed to working together – and potentially with other venues or venue managers – to find the solution that offers the best value for owners, hirers and audiences.

OWNERSHIP MODEL

Some members of the community are curious as to how a partnership project would work, given our three venues are not owned by Dunedin City Council.

We don't believe this is an insurmountable issue. The Playhouse and Mayfair Theatres are owned by charitable organisations and governed in accordance with objectives of community benefit. The Athenaeum is in private ownership, and Zeal Land is pursuing this project primarily with a community focus, rather than a purely commercial objective.

As venue owners, we are open to discussions about how external investment in our venues can be protected to ensure funders' objectives are achieved and appropriately governed over the long term.



COSTS AND FUNDING

COSTS

We have indicative estimates of the capital costs of refurbishments of each of our buildings, based on previous work and feasibility studies.

These are only estimates, and they're based on different methodologies because our projects are at different stages of progress.

They are, however, all based on independent and professional advice.

In order to refine these costs, we need to engage professional services. We believe this is a next step for this concept, and would cost around \$100,000 for all three venues.

COST ESTIMATE BY PROJECT

Project	Redevelopment (\$m)	Fit-out (\$m)	Total (\$m)
Stage 1: Playhouse	4.400	0.250	4.650
Capital costs based on 2021 feasibility study QS estimates; fit-out cost based on quote plus inflation allowance			
Stage 2: Athenaeum	8.500	3.500	12.000
Capital costs based on 2021 feasibility results; performance space fit-out estimated.			
Stage 3: Mayfair	16.500	5.000	21.500
Costs based on 2017 feasibility report + inflation allowance. Fit-out costs estimated based on % of build cost.			
TOTAL	29.400	8.750	38.150
Costs include an allowance for inflation and professional fees.			



FUNDING

The costs outlined above exceed what each venue owner is able to fund from their own reserves.

Each owner is able to access external funding to varying degrees. As registered charitable organisations, the Dunedin Repertory Society and Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust are able to apply for philanthropic, community and Lottery funding. Zeal Land has access to private funding. All three venues are also eligible for various heritage building funds.

We have each had initial engagement with several of those sources of funding, as well as an independent fundraising consultant.

We have heard a consistent message that our refurbishment projects align well with funders' objectives and are of interest to them, but that local authority funding is critical.

Jenni Giblin (owner and director of Funding HQ) shared her opinion that without DCC funding, our facilities would struggle to secure the required funds. However, if DCC were to contribute, then each facility has a very good chance of securing the remaining funds.

We would therefore like to work with Council on the possibility of the three refurbishment projects being part-funded by Council as a cornerstone investor, with entities raising remaining funding from other sources.

This approach could enable Council to make an investment that will leverage a significant further sum of external funds, achieving social and economic benefits for the city.

ADVANTAGES OF A NETWORKED APPROACH

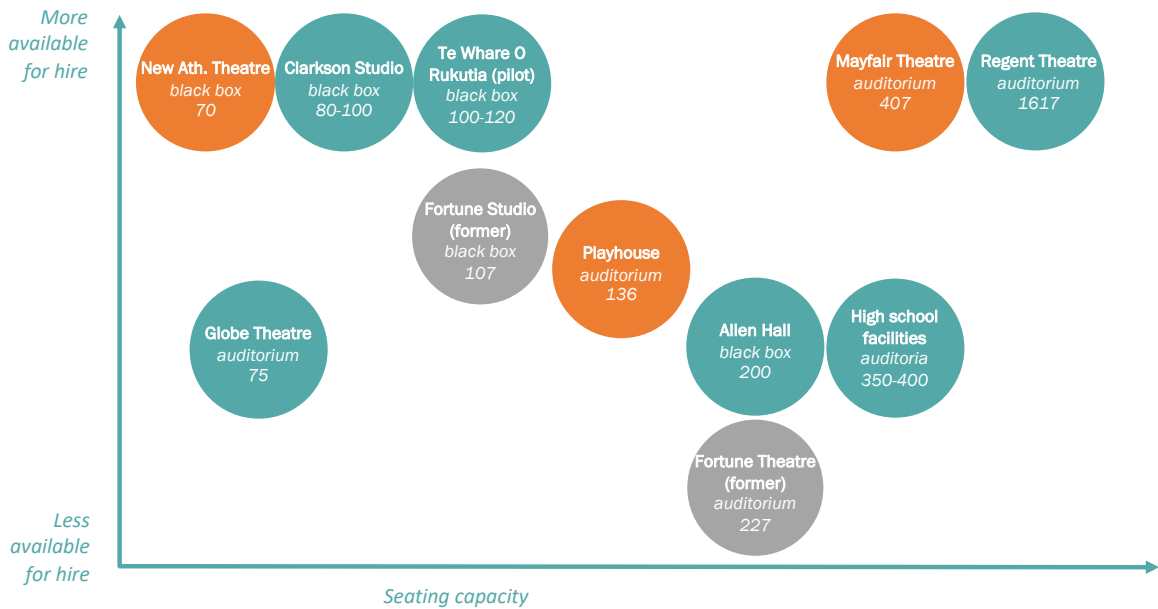
Compared to investing in a single venue, taking a networked approach offers the following advantages:

- A mix of different styles and spaces, including black box and traditional proscenium arch theatres. This supports a wide range of performance styles and genres.
- A mix of different capacities – a studio with 50-100 seats, a 100-120 seat auditorium, larger black box spaces and a 400 seat theatre. Through our consultation, we heard these sizes would suit the kinds of performances and audience numbers sought by the performing arts community.
- A mix of different locations, but all within 10 minutes of the Octagon and all with good public transport links. This spreads economic benefit across more than one site and allows multiple works to be staged at any one time – particularly helpful for Dunedin's festivals.



DUNEDIN'S VENUE CONTEXT

Ōtepoti Dunedin is blessed with some wonderful theatre and other performance spaces. We've set out the key theatre venues below, organised by their capacity and how available they are for hire¹.



We've also drawn up a view of what the scene might look like if our venues were refurbished as imagined in this report.



The Playhouse would have increased availability for hire and resource to facilitate bookings. There would be new spaces in the Athenaeum, designed to fill the capacity gap in the city's status quo. The Mayfair would be shored up to ensure a mid-size venue for larger productions.

The charts above only cover the central city area, but we also acknowledge Mosgiel's Coronation Hall (capacity 350) and tautoko the important role this busy venue plays, particularly for community and recreational performing arts, including for children and young people.

¹ These charts only look at 'availability for hire' based on how open each venue is for bookings. There are of course other aspects that impact on a venue's hireability, such as affordability and accessibility, which are also relevant.

ENGAGEMENT

We've worked hard to ensure we engaged on this idea widely and in good faith with the performing arts community.

We held almost 40 one-on-one meetings with stakeholders, organised a workshop with professional theatre practitioners, and built exciting new relationships across the sector. It's been an enriching journey for our project team. We would like to express our gratitude for the time, energy, insights and expertise the community has generously shared with us over the last few months.

We are particularly grateful to a number of Māori theatre practitioners who have given their time to discuss with us their diverse perspectives on venue needs and visions for the future. We are encouraged by the shared sentiment of looking after what we have. The importance of manaakitanga, welcoming and accessible spaces for Māori creative artists, practitioners and audience is touched upon in the appendix. These are also the core values shared by our network and paves the way for exciting redevelopment opportunities with formal consultation and collaboration.

Relationships with mana whenua and Māori theatre practitioners going forward are critically important for a project of this scale. The Dunedin Theatre Network venues are to be accessible, affordable, available, suitable and supportive of all our performing arts community and specifically inclusive of Māori creative artists and theatre companies.

Below, we share some of the key themes from our engagement on this concept.

We also invited anyone we met with to share their thoughts in their own words, and you can find these in the appendix of this report.

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

We acknowledge the importance of professional theatre to the city, and the sense of loss that remains very real for many following the closure of the Fortune Theatre in 2018.

We met face-to-face with many professional theatre groups and individuals, and also facilitated a workshop with practitioners on 27 October 2022. This attracted a strong turn-out and high engagement from participants, and produced constructive conversation.

Practitioners were clear about what they believe is necessary for a thriving professional theatre scene. Some of that related to venue infrastructure, and they also shared with us their views on the need for better support for the creative sector generally. That's outside the scope of our project but we support their kaupapa.

Most groups we spoke to are not necessarily in favour of a return to a resident theatre company, but see Dunedin's professional theatre landscape as a mix of various local organisations and individuals producing works, supplemented by high quality touring productions. In that context, quality venues that can be used by many groups become even more important.

In terms of venue infrastructure, we heard professional practitioners focus on:

- a flexible performance space (black box) with a seating capacity of somewhere between 200-300 seats
- professional theatre fit-out (sound and lighting equipment, drapes, stage and seating hardware)
- nearby hospitality / social venues
- ongoing resourcing that can support:
 - a professional approach to hires (paid staff to professionally manage hires)
 - technicians and fire wardens to staff performances as required
 - preferably box office and marketing support, including connections to audiences
 - professional branding or reputation – i.e. a venue where audiences can be confident of experiencing high quality theatre
 - potentially an artistic director or curator.

We believe our concept offers a solid starting point for rejuvenation of professional theatre in the city, through a ~200-seat black box studio in the Athenaeum, with appropriate management and branding or programming that can support the re-development of Dunedin's professional theatre scene as it rebuilds its workforce and audiences.

COMMUNITY AND RECREATIONAL THEATRE

Dunedin has a diverse and well-supported community theatre scene, ranging from relatively small productions of plays by amateur societies to dance school recitals to large-scale musical theatre productions that are barely distinguishable from their professional counterparts – and everything in between.

In this camp we include things like high school musical productions and Gang Shows – that is, productions staged by organisations whose main purpose is not usually performing arts.

Community and recreational performing arts are a huge part of the lives of thousands of Dunedin residents. These are often their “sport”, where they contribute many hours on or behind a stage in a huge

variety of roles. Strong community bonds are formed, with societies and organisations often becoming whānau for those involved.

Community and recreational theatre performances are frequently staged in our venues (as well as Coronation Hall in Mosgiel and the Regent Theatre), and we heard through our consultation that there would simply be no other facilities for many groups to go if our venues were to close.

THE THEATRE ECOSYSTEM

Our network proposal strikes an important balance in striving to serve both professional and community theatre.

We are great believers in the theatre ecosystem: a thriving professional scene needs a pipeline of creatives and audience members that often flows from community theatre. A thriving community theatre scene relies on the inspiration and development opportunity that professional theatre provides. A healthy ecosystem as a whole is central to a thriving city with a rich cultural life. Our concept aims to offer Ōtepoti Dunedin the best ‘bang for buck’ for its investment across the ecosystem as a whole.



NEXT STEPS

We believe this idea has sufficient merit and community support to progress to the next level of detail.

We see this as an opportunity for Council to partner with venue owners and other funders to create a uniquely Dunedin answer to the city's performing arts infrastructure needs.

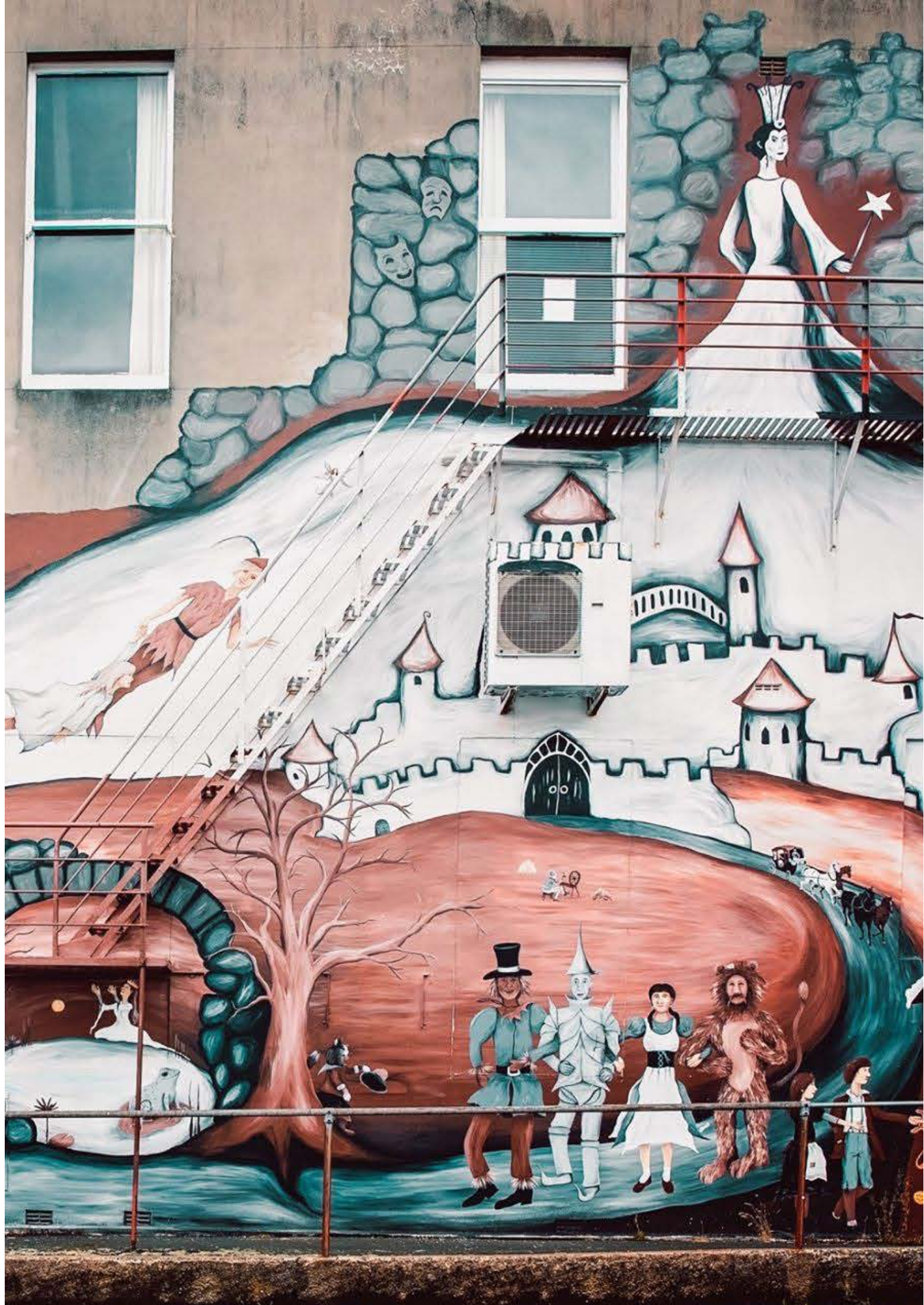
We would therefore like to enter into a MoU to work on the concept's next level of detail together.

A logical next step in this concept will be to invest in costed design options, allowing the community and potential funders to see exactly what is possible, and how much it would cost.

We believe this would cost in the order of \$100,000 and could be completed within approximately 6-8 months.

We would like to seek Council funding for this work, given the refurbishment project as a whole is unlikely to proceed without financial support from Council.

Venues have made significant investment in the groundwork of professional advice on our buildings and developing the Dunedin Theatre Network concept to this point. We would now like to partner with Council to move it forward.



the

APPENDIX

We engaged with many stakeholders in the performing arts community as we developed this idea in more detail. We held almost 40 one-on-one meetings, organised a workshop with professional theatre practitioners, and had useful conversations with venue owners, industry practitioners and experts from around New Zealand.

We invited everyone we met with to also put their thoughts on our concept into writing. Their contributions are collated in this appendix. This is a rich and valuable record of the performing arts community's viewpoints on venues as well as other aspects of the sector.

The project team is extremely grateful to all those who have generously shared their time, expertise and insights with us.

Individuals / Organisations included in this file:

- Dunedin Arts Festival
- Doug Kamo Creative Management
- Harriet Moir
- Dunedin Pod of Drama NZ (Otago Southland Branch)
- Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust
- Friends of the Globe Theatre
- Allison Horsley
- Save Dunedin Live Music
- Improsaurus
- Jessica Sutherland Latton
- Kelly Hocking / The Voice Lab
- Performing Arts Network New Zealand (PANNZ) / Tour-Makers
- Prospect Park Productions
- Cindy Diver (Theatreworks, InterACT)
- Gravity Events
- Arts Access Aotearoa
- Musical Theatre NZ
- Late Bloomers
- Dunedin Theatre Reviewers' Collective
- Kim & Matthew Morgan
- Musical Theatre Dunedin
- Nicholas McBryde
- Suitcase Theatre Trust
- The Unity Creative
- Taieri Musical
- Anna Noonan
- Sahara Breeze Productions
- University of Otago School of Performing Arts
- Opera Otago
- Southern Lights
- Theatre New Zealand
- Southern Heritage Trust
- Otago Scouting Gang Show
- Stage South Trust Board
- Wow! Productions



7 November 2022

To whom it may concern,

We write in support of the Dunedin Theatre Network's proposal for the refurbishment of the Playhouse Theatre, The Mayfair Theatre and the New Athenaeum.

Firstly, in full disclosure, Jemma Adams who is one of the voices for the Dunedin Theatre Network, and the President of the Playhouse Theatre, is a Board Member of the Otago Festival Of the Arts Trust. However, this has in no way influenced our position in regard to the proposal, and Jemma has never used her position as a Trustee to push any venue agenda.

Biennially The Dunedin Arts Festival presents a myriad of professional shows, both domestic and international in many venues across Ōtepoti - however for the sake of this document we will limit our comments to theatre and dance productions. Most of our arrangements are the Festival paying a fee to the company and therefore us dealing with the venue directly and negotiating the best space or the best way to use the space to both present the work to its optimum showcase, and importantly to recoup costs through box office.

The biggest concern we have had over the past two iterations of the Festival have been around venues - *please note that 2018 and prior were administered and governed by the previous Director and Chair*. Dunedin's current theatre and dance venues are either too large for the majority of visiting shows (The Regent, The Dunedin Town Hall), too small to fit works and recoup costs (Te Whare o Rukutia, New Athenaeum), too expensive (DVML and The Regent) or have accessibility issues (The Mayfair, The Playhouse and school theatres during term-time). We are also asking our audiences to purchase tickets that range from \$35 to \$60 for visiting shows and they expect a certain standard of excellence for that cost that most current venues can't fulfil.

For professional theatre and dance productions, touring and presenting in Dunedin comes with many challenges of which some are currently impossible to overcome.

A refurbished, fit for purpose Mayfair would cover a lot of our needs, and would be supplemented by an accessible Playhouse and a revamped New Athenaeum, whilst still using The Regent and Town Hall for larger shows.

The issues with the current venues that would need to be addressed immediately before they could become core Festival and professional touring venues are as below. There are more improvements that need to be made in the longer-term, but these are immediate:

The Mayfair

- Accessibility for audience
- A load-in dock
- Accessibility for loading in and out of shows (i.e. no stairs for disabled performers to navigate)
- Heating

- Upgraded backstage facilities
- Foyer refurbishment
- Auditorium walls painted a darker colour

The Playhouse

- Accessibility for audience
- Accessibility for loading in and out of shows
- Upgraded backstage facilities
- Foyer refurbishment, including a bar and box office area

The New Athenaeum

- Capacity
- Parking
- Loading in and out of shows.

It should be stressed the importance the Playhouse and the Mayfair currently have in the Ōtepoti Dunedin theatre ecosystem. Whatever decision is made regarding a new venue or venues for the city, youth and community theatre cannot be overlooked. Without them and other like them across Aotearoa New Zealand, most of us currently working in the performing arts today would not be working in this field. They are also great breeding grounds for the next generation of theatre goers and supporters. The New Athenaeum also has the potential to be a breeding ground for the next generation of professional theatre-makers, in the same way that Bats (Wellington) and the Basement (Auckland) currently do for their communities.

Since the closure of the Fortune Theatre in 2018, Dunedin has been searching to replace a theatre that wasn't actually fulfilling the community's needs. The proposal from the Dunedin Theatre Network doesn't solve all of the issues we face, but it does solve enough to repair the damage done by four years without a venue for Professional Theatre. The city's performing arts ecosystem cannot survive another four years of consultation and debate.

We strongly advise you look favourably on the Dunedin Theatre Network's proposal, and we look forward to using them as part of the 14th Dunedin Arts Festival in 2024.

Ngā mihi



Charlie Unwin
Festival Director

Christine McNamara
Festival Chair

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ph 03 477 7600 * cell 021 1790111

web www.artsfestivaldunedin.co.nz

To Whom it May Concern,

Since 2006, DKCM Ltd has been a leading producer of live entertainment and theatre in Otepoti.

Our company has a proven track record of producing high quality live theatre supporting artists in the community, pro/am and professional realms across the city and region. We play a key role in providing live entertainment for over 15,000 patrons annually thus providing significant revenue to existing venues within Dunedin, particularly the Regent Theatre, Mayfair Theatre, Coronation Hall and More FM Arena (Edgar Centre).

I am lending my support to the Dunedin Theatre Networks proposal of restoring the Playhouse and Mayfair Theatres.

The Playhouse Theatre operated by the Dunedin Repertory Society plays a significant role in the training and fostering of talent of all ages.

They are the only dedicated children and youth theatre company in Dunedin. This must be protected at all costs, as losing this venue and company will impact the future of all theatre within our city.

Like any sporting code, we need our tamariki to come through with the skills and experience to pass onto the next generation. This all starts with a place to learn and practice their craft, everything the Playhouse Theatre stands for.

However, our city is in desperate need of a mid-sized venue that (with vision), can be transformed into a smaller theatre for more intimate presentations. Our city does not need a venue with multiple small performance spaces. We have a myriad of these already.

Hence my support for the Mayfair Theatres restoration.

Despite its current condition, this venue is still a favorite for touring productions, local community theatre groups, schools, dance companies and competitions, concert promoters etc. largely due to its affordable hire rates, seating capacity, location and supportive board and management.

But like the Playhouse Theatre, the Mayfair Theatre needs support at local government level before they can set their fundraising campaigns into full swing.

It is important that those charged with making the decision of where the \$17.5 million is spent make their decision based on sound advice from practitioners who have significant experience, knowledge, and respect from all areas of the performing arts community – amateur, pro/am and professional.

It was mooted some time ago that a Performing Arts Round Table would be formed by council members to seek this advice. To my knowledge they are still to convene and like the support the Dunedin Theatre Network is seeking, this now needs to be a top priority.

In summary, if we don't invest in these two venues our performing arts community and our community will suffer greatly.

DOUG KAMO

MANAGING DIRECTOR - DKCM LTD

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HARRIET MOIR

*Harriet is an entertainer,
comedian, singer,
actress, writer, MC and
wedding celebrant*



I wish to lend my support to the Dunedin Theatre Network's collaborative proposal to refurbish the Playhouse Theatre, the New Athenaeum Theatre and the Mayfair and in doing so, help establish a range of modern and flexible creative spaces that will largely meet the needs of the performing arts community that exists here in Ōtepoti.

I consider myself to be one of the lucky ones in that I have been able to work almost exclusively as a performing artist in Dunedin for the past 5 years. My range of experience and work traverses multiple genres from opera, to music theatre, straight theatre, corporate entertainment and MC services, writing, singing and more recently, stand up comedy and event production.

Dunedin became my home in 2003 and since then I have had the good fortune of working with Opera Otago, Music Theatre Dunedin, Taieri Musical, Dunedin Comedy, DKCM, Suitcase Theatre, Trickster Ltd, Dunedin Fringe, Prospect Park Productions, H-J Kilkelly Producer, the Dunedin Symphony Orchestra and the Dunedin Arts Festival.

Many of these opportunities have seen me working in and collaborating with all three of the venues in question for the Dunedin Theatre Network proposal. In fact, I have worked in most of Dunedin's performing arts venues at some stage. I fully support the dire need for investment in venues and infrastructure for the performing arts community in Dunedin. Particularly in terms of accessibility, adaptability of spaces and the integration of te ao Māori and other cultural elements.

I have a unique perspective with such a varied range of experience and connection to many local groups, both amateur and professional and I could speak at length about the experiences I have had working in each of the theatres in question and how they serve the different groups in our performing arts community. But in short, I am in support of this project and the revitalisation of all three theatres as a package.

The Dunedin Theatre Network proposal seems like the obvious choice to me as a means of taking some kind of progressive, positive and much needed action to improve the state of venues in Dunedin while meeting the needs of the majority of performing arts groups with a range of venue sizes and capabilities.

I support the Dunedin Theatre Network in their bid to refurbish the Playhouse, the New Athenaeum and the Mayfair theaters for the greater good of our community.

I support this proposal as an artist who is currently working in Ōtepoti and who stands to benefit from this collaborative approach.

I support this project as a parent of future arts practitioners and as an investment in the future of the performing arts scene in Dunedin.

And I support this project as a keen audience member of both local and touring productions and projects.

A shiny new venue would tick several boxes but would be a travesty in my view, if it were at the cost of infrastructure, heart, soul and communities that already exist.

I admire the people involved with the Dunedin Theatre Network and greatly appreciate their vision, passion and commitment.

Ngā mihi



21 November, 2022

To whom it may concern,

The Dunedin Pod of Drama NZ Otago Southland Branch would like to wholeheartedly endorse the Dunedin Theatre Venue Network project. These theatres are a vital part of Dunedin's theatre ecosystem, providing priceless opportunities for our rangatahi to perform and engage with live theatre.

The Children's Theatre and the community focus of The Playhouse makes it particularly valuable to our students and their families. Many of our students are inspired to do Drama after seeing their first show at the Playhouse. Our students who are lucky enough to perform in Playhouse shows themselves, reap enormous benefits, from enhanced well-being and a sense of belonging, to learning valuable skills in acting, theatre technologies and working with the public. They then bring a level of experience and knowledge to our classrooms, elevating the work and expectations of the whole group. This year The Playhouse also hosted Theatre NZ's Theatrefest competition, where groups from several local schools competed, one group going on to compete at a regional and national levels. Without urgent care, The Playhouse will be lost to our students as well as generations of children and their families.

The Mayfair is an important venue for productions of high school musicals. It has the capacity and relative affordability to make it accessible for schools to produce these shows.

The New Athenaeum Theatre has been an important space for school Theatresports groups to meet and compete together and a venue for other Dunedin educational institutions, like Theatreworks' Interact classes to perform their work. Development of the NAT could create many possible opportunities for our students.

Since the closure of the Fortune Theatre it has been very difficult for our students to see high quality professional theatre essential to their Drama education and NCEA requirements. Some schools have had to travel to Christchurch or the North Island to see plays and this is just not feasible for most schools. While venues alone will not solve the lack of a Dunedin professional theatre company, they do support a community theatre ecosystem that could provide valuable venues for professional touring shows, and continue to play a crucial role in providing opportunities and pathways for our students to experience theatre and to become lifelong theatre goers, for when our rangatahi do create home grown professional theatre in Dunedin.

Ngā mihi,
Drama NZ Otago Southland Branch

FRINGE

Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust
19 George St
Dunedin

22 December 2022

Re: Dunedin Theatre Network Proposal

Tēnā koe

I'm pleased to write in support of the Dunedin Theatre Network's (DTN) proposal to refurbish three iconic Dunedin venues and consider a consolidated administration of these theatres.

The Dunedin Fringe is an annual open access arts festival and one of the city's cornerstone events. As a festival made up of independently produced events, creatives engage directly with existing, found/converted, or pop-up venues. Between 40-50 venues host Fringe events each year. The Mayfair, Playhouse and New Athenaeum Theatre have all been utilised by Fringe events, with the latter especially popular owing to its centrality, cost, and staff support.

The Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust is also piloting a venue in the central city, Te Whare o Rukutia. We support the proposal to develop shared resources and management between multiple venues, and for this entity to work with other venues across the city. For our local creative sector to thrive we need supportive, regenerative organisations who recognise the value in working collaboratively. We are eager to work constructively with DTN as their work progresses.

As has been noted by other organisations, the existing DTN proposal mainly addresses physical infrastructure and we believe an operational plan needs to be further developed concurrently. It is pleasing to note the proposal's 'Commitment to ensuring venues are available to the community'. For Fringe artists this includes both economic availability, accessibility for people with a disability/disabilities, cultural competency, and having clear/fast processes for obtaining a booking and supporting performance (venue staffing!). We would like to see a commitment to ensuring refurbished venues will remain financially affordable to the community to support any proposal for large scale funding towards this end.

Ngā mihi



Kate Schrader
Co-Director
Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust

Mobile: +64 27 520 4499
Office: +64 3 477 3350
Email: director@dunedinfringe.nz



The Friends of the Globe Theatre Inc. in Support of the Dunedin Theatre Network initiative

The Globe was founded as a fully independent alternative primarily to what the Playhouse was in the late 1950s. We remain such a theatre, however, we completely support the continuation of all forms of theatre all around Dunedin. The Playhouse, the New Athenaeum, and the Mayfair are all vital parts of amateur, semi-professional, and professional theatre in Dunedin, and all should have the opportunity to be upgraded to meet 21st century standards, and the growing needs of the Dunedin theatre scene.

I have had the opportunity to read through most of the other responses, and I must say that I disagree with much of the more neutral or negative responses. The proposals for all three venues would massively reinvigorate live performance in Dunedin, particularly the proposal for the New Athenaeum. Being right next to the Regent, the proposal would make the Octagon even more of a central hub for the city, than it already is. This is as it should be. All three proposals would give both local companies, and touring shows considerably more options for venue, and the Dunedin scene would be all the better for it.

Dunedin does not require a purpose-built professional theatre. It certainly would not hurt, but what Dunedin needs is vibrancy and options, and venues for all types of performances, that meet the needs of the performers and do not feel like they are about to collapse during a performance. The three venues that are part of this initiative are easily the main three hireable venues in Dunedin, and refurbishing them would make events such as the Dunedin Fringe Festival and Dunedin Arts Festival even more of a spectacle for the city than they already are.

The Friends of the Globe Theatre Inc. fully endorses the proposal for the Dunedin Theatre Network.

Sincerely,

Thomas Makinson

Chair of the Friends of the Globe Theatre Inc.

ALLISON HORSLEY

Allison has been a professional script and story consultant for more than 25 years, and has worked in professional theatres in USA and New Zealand



Ōtepoti Dunedin is enviably poised to do something most cities never have an opportunity to do: create a new theatre model based on an already existing ecosystem of artists, with an eye toward the future. As a theatre practitioner (dramaturg/script advisor) I have had the good fortune to observe different theatre models both in my native United States and my adopted home of Aotearoa New Zealand, and I believe the network model being put forth by the Playhouse, Athenaeum, and Mayfair is the best solution for the foreseeable future because it has sustainability at its heart.

In the US I worked in several full and part-time roles in larger American regional theatres, ranging in size from annual operating budgets of \$5 million to approximately \$25 million. They operated similarly to Auckland Theatre Company, The Court Theatre, and the late Fortune, in that they employed a staff of artists and administrators to support a 9-12-month programme of plays attended by subscribers who were generally north of 50, white, and had plenty of disposable income. As part of the Artistic Department at each of these theatres, I helped curate each program with our subscribers in mind, simultaneously pushing our artistic boundaries where possible but keeping the bottom line in mind. We operated in purpose-built theatres named for the donors who underwrote their construction, and a board comprised of wealthy non-arts professionals oversaw the leadership of the theatre.

This model is collapsing in the States, for many good reasons, and when I hear there are discussions afoot for building a new theatre that would house a resident producing company, I simultaneously get excited because that's the model I'm most familiar with (and frankly is most likely to employ me), and I cringe because I don't think that model will serve Ōtepoti's ecosystem. We need something more nimble, something more sustainable to match the priorities of the city's ongoing efforts. "Subscribers" as theatres have known them are, frankly, dying off. Younger audiences don't attend theatre the way our ancestors did, with fixed seats on the first Thursday of every season. In the same way diners are (slowly) becoming accustomed to accessing menus at restaurants via QR code, audiences are changing how they engage with theatre. By having multiple spaces offering different experiences, accessible to different artists and audiences alike, we cultivate a richer city.

SAVE DUNEDIN LIVE MUSIC



Save Dunedin Live Music is a community organization that advocates for live music in Ōtepoti Dunedin. We see accessible arts and culture – including theatre - as key to ensuring Ōtepoti remains a very liveable and vibrant city and (in our very biased opinion) one of the best small cities in the world.

One of the key benefits of the Dunedin Theatre Network's proposal is that it builds on the city's existing strengths and heritage buildings, as well as being community-led and collaborative. We look forward to seeing the ways in which this initiative can support our performing arts ecosystem!

**MAREA COLOMBO /
IMPROSAURUS**

*Marea is the Artistic
Director of Improsaurus,
Dunedin's only improvised
theatre troupe.*

*Marea is also an
independent theatre
practitioner.*



I am writing in support of the Three Theatre Upgrade proposed by the Dunedin Theatre Network. If you are not involved in theatre it may seem confusing as to the importance of a venue upgrade. As an artist, I hope to explain why this upgrade is so vital and the benefit it will bring to the artistic community and the wider Dunedin community.

Since the closure of the Fortune Theatre, other venues have been trying to support artists (professional and emerging). They have been doing so with little financial or time resources; The Mayfair, The New Athenaeum and The Playhouse Theatre have been working tirelessly to support Dunedin artists. And some amazing theatre has occurred in those hallowed halls. The individuals managing those spaces are aware of the unique challenges each space presents and are trying to scrape together resources to create minor improvements.

Despite some success, all three of these venues need extensive upgrades. These upgrades will allow them to be accessible, safe, and welcoming spaces for artists and audiences. Art should be accessible to everyone and the proposed upgrades would help address a massive access issue the city is currently facing. This access issue is relevant for both artists and audience members.

Furthermore, these changes will ensure the theatres are upgraded to industry standard. This upgrade will have multiple roll on effects. First, locals who train in these spaces will find it easier to source work outside of Dunedin as they will have engaged with similar technical aspects of theatres. Second, these upgrades will encourage external artists to travel to Dunedin and stage their shows. Third, as a cultural psychologists, these upgrades will send important messages about the value of art. When theatres visibly look like safe and important spaces, people tend to engage more because they understand the value of art, and are willing to support artists. We are currently sending a message that art is not important and that simply is not true.

Dunedin has always been known for its art scene – live music, live theatre, comedy, dance. The upgrade of these venues would help support all parts of the Dunedin art scene. These upgrades allow you to be part of the revival of Dunedin art (music and theatre especially). When venues are improved, artists will create more, and when artists create more, the city develops a heart. Dunedin deserves a chance to keep building its heart. Please help us.

**JESSICA SUTEHRLAND
LATTON (KAI TAHU)**

*Jessica is a playwright,
director and performer
based in Ōtepoti*

I love what this team are creating and tautoko their endeavours.

I'm especially excited to see the Playhouse receive love so we can use it to build capacity for new Dunedin works, youth theatre, new audiences for music and upcoming theatre companies in the city and maybe even home base for a Māori Theatre Company.

Developing the Athenaeum into a multi purpose black box and arts center is a brilliant proposal and will bring so much energy and focus to our centre.

I love the vision of protecting Dunedin's unique architectural heritage and blue print, and the complex at the Mayfair is full of potential.

I tautoko this initiative from these hard working and visionary creatives working to find the solutions our shifting industry requires.

Mauri ora, Jessica Sutherland Latton (Kai Tahu)

**KELLY HOCKING /
THE VOICE LAB**

Kelly is a professional actor, theatre maker, vocalist, and voice teacher based in Dunedin.



I am a professional actor, theatre maker, vocalist, and voice teacher based in Dunedin and I have performed at virtually every venue/hall/museum (!) Ōtepoti has to offer. Whilst many have charm, it can not be denied that there are major accessibility and safety concerns. Many members of the musical theatre community regularly talk about getting “Mayfair fever” when we perform there. This refers to the cold, dusty, uneven and damp dressing room areas that always end up stirring up our allergies or causing coughs and colds to linger. I am weary of having to put on thermals and puffers and take hot water bottles to venues for rehearsals. Before he passed away in 2016, my wheelchair-bound Father in Law was never able to see my many performances at the Mayfair.

With my theatre-maker hat on, I need venues that are affordable and comfortable. The Nat is the only venue I have been able to afford (great affordability there) but seating is not flexible and the capacity isn't big enough. The Mayfair, on the other hand, would be far too big for me to do an independent show as well as prohibitively expensive. I have found performing at Rukitia to be frustrating due to the street noise and the inflexible nature of the space. Many times I have had potential audience members tell me they didn't come to a show at the Nat / Mayfair because it was too cold and uncomfortable.

With my voice-teacher hat on (I run The Voice Lab nz), I'd love a venue for my 160 students to perform in that was central to town. We used to use The NAT in the early days - but as the studio expanded we outgrew the space, requiring more than 200 seats per performance. We now use Trinity Catholic College - which is a lovely venue, but not flexible in its seating or staging. I am particularly interested in the development of a larger space at the NAT for the purpose of these concerts - provided it was affordable of course! And hoping it would have sound equipment and material design suitable for musical performance.

The question remains about whether Dunedin needs a new professional and permanent theatre company. I have done many a show at The Fortune and although I loved my time there - that space was also not accessible, affordable or very comfortable. Perhaps if a permanent company comes along, one of the new spaces would serve as a home base.

**PERFORMING ARTS
NETWORK OF NEW
ZEALAND (PANNZ) /
TOUR-MAKERS**

Tour-Makers is PANNZ's National Touring Agency which supports the touring of professional Aotearoa theatre, music and dance and is a key initiative working toward a sustainable touring network in New Zealand.

Our initial focus is on managing and supporting medium to large-scale national tours and delivering a minimum of two tours a year that include at least 3-4 centres. We have been on the road since 2015, delivering significantly more shows, to more centres across the country and we're not showing any sign of slowing down!



With a strong focus on audience development and working toward sustainable audiences, we work closely with venues and producers to bring more professional New Zealand productions to more people in their own community.

Previous tours include: Daffodils, That Bloody Woman, The Mooncake & the Kumara, Little Shop of Horrors, The White Guitar, Jekyll and Hyde, The Māori Sidesteps, Still Life with Chickens, A Doll's House, Wild Dogs Under My Skirt, Meremere, A Boy Called Piano and Thoroughly Modern Māui.

At present part of our funding criteria is that the touring shows need to be performed in a professional theatre setting with a capacity of 200+. Wherever possible we work in partnership with venues and festivals as well as self-presenting in some circumstances.

We are supportive of the proposal from the DTN to upgrade the existing facilities and of particular interest to us would be the Mayfair Theatre. At present it has limitations as to what can be presented there but the size and audience capacity is well suited to the type of shows that we tour. We generally perform only once in each centre on the tour so this mid-size venue works in terms of being able to achieve good audience numbers without the expense of having to pay further venue hire for additional nights. We like to work in partnership with presenters and the existing arts eco-system to leverage off their community relationships and to connect with potential audiences for our shows. The redeveloped Athenaeum could also be utilised for some of the smaller touring shows we manage.

In Dunedin we have toured shows successfully in partnership with the Dunedin Arts Festival and have also self-presented at the Regent Theatre which is better suited to large scale commercial shows and too costly to consider again for the type of work we tour.

It would be great for us to have a venue in Dunedin that we could partner with outside of the festival to bring a broader range of professional NZ productions to the community on a more regular basis. The proposal from DTN would help to grow the arts in the region by providing fit for purpose venues that would attract local, national and international shows. Please feel free to contact me if you would like any further information.

Jo Bond
Senior Producer PANNZ/Tour-Makers

Tuesday 25th October 2022

Statement of Interest for Dunedin Theatre Network's Workshop Venue(s) Proposal

Tēnā koutou

We at Prospect Park Productions have been impressed and heartened by the Dunedin Theatre Network's initiative in investigating how to redevelop and ensure the future of three significant Ōtepoti Dunedin theatre institutions. The Playhouse, Athenaeum, and Mayfair theatres represent a cross-section of local communities within and around the performing arts. All three buildings are currently (partially) operational and utilised by a range of the industry from amateur to professional, local to touring, and are of cultural and heritage significance to our UNESCO City of Literature.

As Prospect Park has stated previously (including in DCC Annual Plan submissions 2020, 2021, 2022), to sustain and grow feasible and accessible local performing arts models and initiatives, there needs to be investment in existing venues alongside resourcing non-venue-based organisations and practitioners already working in the city. For this, accessible, flexible, and configurable spaces are crucial, that serve a range of purposes including residencies and development as well as presentation.

In investigating venue development options, we urge the Theatre Network to consider the needs and rights of disabled practitioners and audience; deaf/Deaf, disabled, and tāngata whaikaha to be actively involved in planning processes, and implementation of policies concerning FOH and backstage spaces, information, and communication technologies. With this statement of support, we are providing a trial Venue Accessibility Checklist, which has been drafted and currently trailed by Emily Duncan as part of the Creative NZ-funded research she is undertaking around accessibility needs for artists with disabilities. Emily is happy to discuss this research further with the network in how to pertain to venue development.

Prospect Park believe that collaboration around resources, infrastructure, and specialised skills and development is necessary to fill the current untenable gaps that threaten the survival of the local sector. Please accept our apologies for not being able to attend the workshop to be held on Thursday 27th October. However, we welcome any future opportunities to be further consulted by Dunedin Theatre Network.

Kā mihi nui



Emily Duncan

On behalf of Emily Duncan & H-J Kilkelly
Co-directors Prospect Park Productions
www.prospectpark.co.nz

Home of the Ōtepoti Theatre Lab & Ōtepoti Writers Lab



ATTENTION Jemma Adams
Dunedin Theatre Network

26th October 2022

RE: Theatreworks Ltd & interACT Drama Classes support for Dunedin Theatre Network

Background: Theatreworks Ltd has thirty years fulltime experience creating and producing Professional theatre events in Dunedin. It's drama classes have been operating for twenty six of those.

Having looked over the Dunedin Theatre Network proposal going to council (and it's draft blueprints), we support further DCC investment into creating safe and accessible performance space for the Playhouse and New Athenaeum Theatre. These refurbished two spaces could be of use for small scale production work (like those our drama classes create) or for fringe/young theatre companies.

However both these spaces will struggle to provide the requirements for professional productions which the city still is lacking due to their low seating capacity and rigid orientation of space. A black box 200 + seat theatre is still required for us be able to offer sustainable vibrant professional theatre to Dunedin audiences.

The Mayfair component of the proposal does not get our support as the funding required to get it up to even spec, far outweighs any practical use it would have as a venue for theatre, and too little information has been provided on how and what they plan to do with that funding.

Ngā mihi nui



Cindy Diver
Director
Theatreworks Ltd - Casting for Film & TV
InterACT Drama Classes

19 Wharfdale St
DUNEDIN 9014
Cell: 027-4314-025
Email: office@theatreworks.co.nz
Web: www.interactdrama.co.nz

GRAVITY EVENTS

Gravity Events is a Dunedin-based company offering a wide range of events and production services

**GRAVITY
EVENTS**

As a business Gravity Events fully supports the refurbishment and upgrades of community theatres including the Mayfair Theatre, Playhouse Theatre & the New Athenaeum Theatre in Ōtepoti Dunedin.

We believe that adding finances towards the refurbishment and maintenance of these theatres would be an important investment into the future generation of theatre, sound/lighting technicians and more. Community theatres allow opportunities for children and young people to learn. We have personally embraced providing a training ground for those who have an interest in the tech and events industry through programmes like Gateway but there are still not enough opportunities for young people to get involved in tech. We have found through our years of experience that Community Theatres like Mayfair, Playhouse and New Athenaeum provide a great training environment where students and children can get valuable hands-on experience that they would not be able to get in larger or more corporate venues.

We are also in support of having a variety of venues within Dunedin. The investment in all three theatres allows for more versatility and diversity in shows and events with each theatre having a variety of audience sizes and allows for a diversity of performances at different price points.

We love our city and investing in these local theatres is also an investment in the local community as it allows for a grassroots community and for local Dunedin businesses to rally together. We would love to see the local community theatres of Ōtepoti Dunedin thrive.

ARTS ACCESS AOTEAROA

Arts Access Aotearoa | Putanga Toi ki Aotearoa's purpose is to increase access to the arts for people who experience barriers to participation as artists, performers, audience members, and gallery and museum visitors.

Through our Arts For All network we aim to encourage festivals, artists, performing arts companies, literary organisations, museums, galleries, venues and producers to improve their access to Deaf and disabled audiences.

It has been great to connect with Dunedin Theatre Network to hear about their plans to refurbish the existing theatre infrastructure of Ōtepoti. A huge barrier for many people in being able to attend and perform in theatre is physical access to spaces. Being able to refurbish the Playhouse, Athenaeum & Mayfair theatres would give an opportunity to make these spaces more accessible to artists and audience members. We are looking forward to the development of the Dunedin Theatre Network refurbishment project and are happy to offer advice and guidance on accessibility throughout.

**arts
access
aotearoa**
Putanga Toi ki Aotearoa



22/11/22

To Whom it May Concern

I am writing this letter as President of Musical Theatre New Zealand based here in Dunedin.

I am very excited by the prospect of the Dunedin Theatre network and what it would achieve for the City. From a Musical Theatre perspective, we would really like to get behind retaining The Mayfair Theatre in South Dunedin.

While she has been a grand lady in her time, she retains many fine heritage features which would be a great shame to lose. The size of the auditorium is the most important here for Musical Theatre. The Regent Theatre, by her share size and prohibitive costs means it is only useful for the larger shows with equally large budgets.

Musical Theatre traditionally costs more than plays to produce and therefore needs a larger auditorium to fill, to help pay for these costs. The Mayfair Theatre sits in the range, to make it very viable for smaller scale shows to cover their costs.

There is a need in Dunedin for a traditional theatre specially to cover youth productions and teaching opportunities for young people to move into this industry and they join the workforce.

We need more youth musical theatre productions here in Dunedin and The Mayfair would be the place of choice. It is also the best place to produce juke box musicals and has a very fine history of productions over the years. Let's keep it.

Kind Regards
Helen Horsnell

President Musical Theatre New Zealand
helen@mtnz.co.nz www.mtnz.co.nz

Connecting communities creatively

Te huihuinga mai i ngā hapori wairua auaha

LATE BLOOMERS

Late Bloomers is an Ōtepoti based theatre company, created by Bronwyn Wallace & Marea Colombo. Both creators were born overseas and raised in Ōtepoti, and have a deep passion for the longevity of creative industries in the city.

The kaupapa of Late Bloomers is inclusive, supportive, progressive - the company focuses on creating new work, building avenues for other creators to stage new pieces, upskilling local practitioners and focusing on Arts Access.



Late Bloomers supports the Theatre Network Proposal, as frequent users of the NAT. Updating the facilities we have is a good solution for where the arts scene sits in Dunedin today. This is by no means the solution to one professional theatre and company being lost from the city, however it ensures the survival and growth of a valuable space for children's theatre, a fringe black box venue, and a larger traditional space. All of the spaces have an interesting history in the city, and do not function to the best of their ability as they currently stand, particularly when assessing Arts Access. We hope that by building this theatre network, many artistic communities in Ōtepoti can share resources and create together.

THEATRE REVIEWERS COLLECTIVE

*Barbara Frame
Brenda Harwood
Terry MacTavish
Helen White*

We are a small group of established theatre reviewers. Each of us has a decades-long association with the performing arts, and writes reviews on a professional basis.

Our principal aim, as stated in our Constitution, is "to support the production of high-quality theatrical events in Dunedin City," and our main activity is producing and judging the Dunedin Theatre Awards, which are normally held annually.

In accordance with our stated aim, we have a strong focus on quality, and because high quality events require high quality venues, we advocate the establishment of a professional theatre equipped to professional standards.

Such a venue does not seem to be a part of DTN's concept, but we suggest that it could be, possibly within the Athenaeum space, which appears to be the largest and most flexible of the three. Dunedin's senior theatre professionals would be the best people to advise on size, administrative areas and other amenities.

This would mean that Dunedin would have the professional theatre that it so desperately needs, while allowing for the development of other theatres which could perform the vital functions of providing places for individuals and companies to incubate theatre skills, innovate, experiment, and on occasion fail.

Since the Fortune Theatre's closure in 2018 there has not been a truly professional theatre in Dunedin, with deplorable effects on the number of top-quality productions available to local audiences. This is especially disgraceful in the context of the city's otherwise vibrant arts scene, and because of Dunedin's status as a UNESCO City of Literature.

The matter is urgent. If the DTN plan goes ahead without incorporating a professional theatre, it is hard to envisage funding for one being made available in the short-medium or even long terms. Meanwhile, the highly experienced theatre professionals on whom such a theatre would depend are becoming disillusioned and some have already gone elsewhere. Audiences, too, need to be nurtured or they will lose their appreciation and understanding of this vital art form.

We applaud the dedication of the DTN team, and the impressive amount of work that has gone into the concept, and we urge that the need for a fully professional theatre be recognised and incorporated into the plan.

KIM MORGAN

Kim is a free-lance director, performer and author, with more than 30 years of experience in professional and academic theatres. She is the driving force behind Dunedin Summer Shakespeare, and recently helmed productions for Taieri Musical, Opera Otago, and Dunedin Fringe, as well as developed work with Prospect Park Productions and Moose of Fire Productions.

MATTHEW MORGAN

Matthew is an award-winning sound designer, technical director, and actor, with nearly 50 years of experience in professional and academic theatres. He sound designed more than a dozen shows at the Fortune Theatre, and has also worked for WOW! Productions, TheatreWorks, Prospect Park Productions, Dunedin Summer Shakespeare, and various Dunedin Fringe shows.

After sitting down at length with Jemma Adams and attending the DTN hui last month, we remain of two minds about the proposals before Dunedin's theatrical communities: the Playhouse, Athenaeum, and Mayfair Theaters absolutely deserve support and salvaging (though perhaps to differing degrees), yet those efforts must NOT be at the literal expense of the \$17m expressly set aside to support professional theatre in Dunedin. As this conversation evolves from an either/or proposition into a both/and proposal, it is our hope that the DCC will acknowledge that Dunedin now lags woefully behind other (often smaller) cities in its arts support – and that a substantial investment must be made NOW before the remainder of the professional arts community leaves for greener pastures.

We would also like to echo Marty Roberts' and WOW!'s suggestion that DTN re-name their work as the "Dunedin Theatre Venue Proposal", as the excellent work that Jemma, Laurie and Co. have presented is clearly about refurbishing aging places – which is a very different thing than supporting people or the practice of theatre (especially at the professional level). Yet even in our current "gig economy", this can't be a "if you build it, they will come" proposition. Upgraded historic spaces or flashy new ones look good on a city's PR portfolio; but unless there is sufficient support staff tied to a venue (e.g., technical, production, box office) – and unless professional artists can afford to mount a production there (e.g., rent, fees, royalties, technical expenses, PR) – a flashy venue will soon gather dust and risk closure. [We need look no further than Christchurch's Little Andromeda...] But as this particular proposal is about physical spaces and not artistic stipends, we'll shelve our "people, not just places" mantra for another day in order to consider DTN's specific merits.

Echoing many of our professional colleagues, we find the proposals for The Playhouse and The Athenaeum the most compelling. The Playhouse is an integral part of the Dunedin theatre ecosystem, wherein amateur and community players learn the ropes and essential communities (e.g. children) are served. Jemma has a clear, achievable vision for the venue's refurbishment, and we would urge the DCC to commit to this project with funds that are not already earmarked for professional theatre. The under-utilized Athenaeum is the most promising central site for an arts hub and where we most imagine ourselves mounting productions – though it remains to be seen if it could be reconfigured to hold a workable 250-seat flexible space (the minimum for a professional company and national tours). Having voted for this option in the DCC's latest 10 Year Plan, we remain keen to see if it is viable; and if so, then we would be amenable to spending the earmarked \$17m professional theatre funds on this upgraded venue. And while Kim has a certain fondness for The Mayfair after staging a large musical and an opera there in the past year, we are acutely aware of its deficiencies (structural and sonic), and leery of the immense amount of money it would take to make that space fit for use. Further, a large proscenium house / end-stage is not really appealing to us as artists (nor many of our colleagues), and we can't imagine seeking out that space for a production when we weren't placed there under contract. So while the venue may be appealing to tour promoters and larger event producers, we are categorically not in favour of using any of the \$17m professional theatre fund on that venue. Much as we'd hate to see the ol' girl go, the venue may simply not be salvageable unless a magical funding source appears to that sole end.

At the end of the day, the existing \$17m fund was established to support professional theatre in Dunedin – which might use the Athenaeum, *if* it could be configured to work. If not, a purpose-built facility (e.g., an adapted warehouse) must still be in the cards for us. We implore the DCC not to simply throw all the existing money at other deserving projects and call it done. It would be a massive breach of trust with Dunedin's professional artists, and we would still lack a suitable space for regular professional productions or a resident company. So while we remain in favour of the proposed refurbishments to the various degrees noted, we must conclude the

only path forward is for the DCC to support these projects without using the existing \$17m fund, unless it is for a viable professional space (e.g. Athenaeum or a new build).

MUSICAL THEATRE DUNEDIN

Musical Theatre Dunedin (previously known as Dunedin Operatic Society), has been in existence for 90 years. Over this time we have produced world class productions with cast, crew and musicians all amateur and living in the Dunedin catchment.



Most of our productions over recent years have been staged in the Regent Theatre. We would be one of their major clients and consider this venue outstanding for us to stage major Broadway/West End productions.

Our productions involve a large number of people onstage, back-stage, front of house and production team. For example, we produced Les Miserable in 2019. In this show we had 41 cast, 16 orchestra members and more than 90 people involved behind the scenes to bring the show to the Dunedin public. We are the largest organisation producing stage shows and fostering musical talent in Dunedin, so we are invested in supporting the development of theatres in Dunedin.

As the cost of staging these productions is now in the vicinity of half million dollars, staging productions at a large venue like the Regent Theatre is not always financially viable. In order to stage smaller less costly productions a smaller venue with the correct facilities is paramount.

We are lucky in Dunedin to have the Mayfair Theatre which is ideal for these smaller productions but it is very much in need of refurbishment. We would encourage the council to consider the proposals put forward from the Dunedin Theatre Network with face to face dialogue with all amateur performing arts companies. Members of the council put their names forward and when elected want to see Dunedin thrive. Musical Theatre is at the heart of Dunedin's music culture and the success of these companies should be forefront in councils thinking when planning for the future.

Although Musical Theatre Dunedin is not directly involved with the Playhouse we would encourage the council to consider committing to this also. It is a great venue focusing on acting especially for children and young people. Acting is a fundamental skill that crosses all boundaries in the field of entertainment and the arts. The Playhouse provides an important training ground for young performers and we at Musical Theatre Dunedin have been fortunate in having a number of these young people being involved in our productions.

This council needs to be actively investing in the performing arts in Dunedin and the investment in theatre spaces is vital. The Dunedin Theatre Network deserves your full support.

John Finlayson

President

Musical Theatre Dunedin.

NICHOLAS MCBRYDE

Nicholas McBryde is the founding director of Arts Festival Dunedin, and has spent his 40-year career in the professional performing arts predominantly in Dunedin and Christchurch.

There has been a great deal of talking about theatre in Dunedin during the past 4½ years, since the demise of the Fortune Theatre and the subsequent Charcoalblue Report.

Most of the discussions have been focused on venues, due to the ill-conceived parameters of the DCC/CNZ commissioned Charcoalblue study, which provided a lot of high-quality information, but was misdirected in its scope from the outset.

In my Opinion piece in the ODT (3 May 2022) I spoke of the misunderstanding and cross-purposes that have dominated all the discussions around Dunedin Theatre.

Still fractious and fractured, the theatre fraternity in this city seems unable to reach any consensus on the profession, the role of the creatives, the expectations around venues, and the pivotal (but completely ignored) place of the audience in the future planning for theatre.

Whilst the currently proposed three theatres concept has many shortcomings, the fact that an opportunity has been taken to actively advance some new initiative and development has to be applauded. There is a very strong possibility that the DCC could reverse their commitment to the \$17million designated for the Charcoalblue theatre venue initiative, especially if the new Council can see that the theatre community is unable to reach any sort of consensus.

Developing the Playhouse into a 21st century venue-for-hire is a pragmatic first step to capitalise on the current ring-fenced funding. Having a well-designed functioning theatre, even with a capacity of only 110, will alleviate the recognised need for a good space for the local creatives who deliver ad hoc product in Dunedin. It must be recognised that this proposal will not solve the big issues. And the venue will be too small to be viable for many touring companies to consider bringing their work to Dunedin.

The development of the Athenaeum however is more problematic simply because the DCC ring-fenced funding, of \$17million towards theatre venues, cannot be invested in a space that is owned by a private individual (unlike the Playhouse and Mayfair which are not-for-profit charitable trusts).

It must be acknowledged that eating into the \$17 million fund for upgrades to existing venues will be the end of any initiative as recommended by the Charcoalblue Report.

The Dunedin theatre community needs to overcome the competitive and ego-project mindset, and get behind the best idea on the table. If not, the city will continue to spiral downwards, losing expertise, talent, and knowledge, as frustrated and disillusioned individuals seek opportunities elsewhere.

Dunedin lost a significant anchor company when the Fortune Theatre closed; Funding decisions from central government have negatively impacted the Fringe Festival; Both within the theatre discipline and the wider arts environment, national touring companies are increasingly leaving Dunedin off their touring schedules. An initiative to reverse the loss of quality of life in the performing arts arena in Dunedin is sorely needed. The Playhouse redevelopment initiative seems a sensible place to start.

SUITCASE THEATRE

Suitcase Theatre is a small Dunedin theatre group focused on producing great theatre for the theatre's sake.

We are passionate about producing theatre that is supportive of and directly meaningful to the community we exist within.



I was fortunate to have personally 'grown up' at the Playhouse, starting in 1995 at the age of 9, and putting my stamp on 18 productions before advancing into amateur and community adult productions elsewhere in Dunedin, and am proud to have been a founding trustee of Suitcase Theatre Trust. I believe that I would not have found this pathway without the encouragement and nurturing offered by the Dunedin Repertory. If Dunedin were to be left without such an incubator in the future, one must question whether intrigued young minds will still be encouraged and developed, or if we risk losing future generations of enthusiastic and driven actors with no place to call home. Can Dunedin risk that?

Organisations like Suitcase who don't have a permanent space rely heavily on the existing theatre infrastructure in Dunedin to use as appropriate to the show being produced. We have on a number of occasions hired both the Athenaeum and the Playhouse, however with both being in need of remedial work to ensure they remain viable for continued use, we would potentially be out of options if funding for necessary works couldn't be secured. This is a real concern.

One of the most valuable products of the proposal is the supporting spaces potentially being made available within the Theatre Network (Arts Centre housed within the Athenaeum). For those organisations like Suitcase, typically we have the means and funding to cover theatre hire costs for the production itself, but are not always able to cover additional costs for rehearsals within a full theatre environment, and are usually just needing a 'room'. Of those spaces that are affordable currently, it is challenging to secure regular bookings and there is often a contest for accessibility. Increasing the volume and accessibility for spaces like this that community / touring / professional groups can use without incurring significant cost would be an excellent outcome.

To me, the full proposal appears to tick all of the right boxes, and the resulting Network would certainly be relied on by Suitcase for future productions. It would of course be a major disappointment if it weren't favourably assessed.

In lieu of the full proposal, I would personally like to see investment in remedial and enhancing works for at least the Playhouse and Athenaeum.

Laura Wells, Suitcase Theatre Trust

JODIE & KRISTOPHER BATE
THE UNITY CREATIVE

The Unity Creative is a company passionate about making innovative work touching on the raw nerve of human existence and experience. A big part of what we do is to collaborate with artists from across a range of art forms depending on the needs and vision of our projects.

To date our work has ranged from physical theatre to award winning childrens' theatre, our most recent work in development is a multidisciplinary piece called 'Loamy Hearts- Parallel Journeys to Dachau'.

We are interested in making theatre and dance from Dunedin for the world alongside teaching and inspiring young and emerging artists.



With regards to the current three venue refurbishment / development plan, there are aspects which we would champion, and others which we believe to be inadequate for the future needs of professional theatre in Dunedin.

In terms of what is essential, it is of paramount importance that The Playhouse Theatre receive the necessary funding to ensure its prolonged future in the Dunedin Theatre landscape.

Dunedin Repertory is unique in the Dunedin theatre scene as it provides an incubator style ecosystem where children and young folk can cut their teeth and learn their craft, not only as actors and performers, but also as stage managers and lighting/sound techs. This is unique in Dunedin and a vital training ground that acts as a pathway for those who seek to go into further professional training at institutions such as Toi Whakaari or to go directly into professional development with any of the number of Dunedin's professional production companies. This role is unique in the Dunedin milieu and one of vital importance for the future sustainability of the Dunedin arts ecosystem which is not replicated anywhere else nor is it easily replaced.

The Dunedin Repertory Society was the avenue by which I myself (Kristopher) entered into professional theatre. Without my time with Dunedin Rep, I can't imagine how I would have gained sufficient knowledge and experience so as to build a career in professional theatre that to date spans more than 20 years. I know that my experience through Dunedin Rep is shared by many other professional theatre practitioners in the city and beyond. To lose this pathway would be terminally detrimental to our sector.

That being said, we believe that the best companion to the incubator of talent that Dunedin Rep and the Playhouse Theatre are is a custom built facility that can serve as a multi disciplinary hub that suits the purposes of the theatre, music, dance, and musical theatre interests in the city.

The current proposal for refurbishment/development of the Athenaeum and Mayfair, in our opinion, does not go far enough. Both the Athenaeum and the Mayfair are too limited in their scope both as currently configured, as well as under the proposed changes.

We believe that these venues should continue as available spaces for hire, providing options for local, as well as touring practitioners, however, we believe that the Dunedin performing arts community would best be served by a custom built venue that has a number of different spaces that can be in used simultaneously, and configured easily to the specific needs of the show to be performed. This new venue can serve alongside existing venues such as The Mayfair and The Regent to provide a wide range of available spaces and opportunities to strengthen the arm of the Dunedin performing arts community.

We believe that the DCC should invest current and future funding into refurbishment of the Playhouse Theatre in order to develop the future of Dunedin theatre as well as in the custom build of a new arts hub as a state of the art space in which to demonstrate the unique character and quality of the Dunedin creative scene.

TAIERI MUSICAL

Taieri Musical is a charitable society whose goal is to produce high quality, financially feasible musical theatre while providing opportunities for local performers and theatre enthusiasts



Taieri Musical is proud to provide opportunities for Dunedin audiences, performers and theatre enthusiasts. We produce musicals, which are typically at the more technically demanding area of theatre, with shows often including significant lighting and sound rigs, large moving sets, flies where possible, LED screens or projection, large casts with many costume changes, and a large band or orchestra. We are based on the Taieri but in recent years have performed at the Coronation Hall Mosgiel, The Mayfair, and The Regent. We normally perform one major production each year.

We are very supportive of the work that Dunedin Theatre Network is doing to ensure our city has appropriate spaces for theatre moving into the future. We need secure access to venues that are safe, accessible, and well resourced to meet the demands of musical theatre, while remaining affordable for us as a Not For Profit society. The payoff is that our productions typically see anywhere between 3,000-11,000 seats sold per season, as well as providing opportunities for 50-200 cast and crew. Musical Theatre has been described as "the superfood of the arts" - where every discipline comes together and each production creates opportunities across the breadth of the arts. Consequently each of our productions has a significant impact on Dunedin's cultural footprint.

Our shows may be the only piece of live theatre our audience members see in a year. The continued attractiveness of musical theatre, for audience members, cast, crew and production teams, is vital to the success of the arts in our community, and having appropriate spaces moving forward, where we can achieve all of the above, will be key to enabling this.

ANNA NOONAN

Anna is a freelance dancer, choreographer and teacher from Ōtepoti Dunedin

My name is Anna. I am a freelance dance artist (dancer/choreographer/teacher) hailing from Ōtepoti. I have a BA Dance from Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne and an MFA Choreography from University of Roehampton, London. I perform in a variety of performance work around the city as well as create and produce my own dance work. Currently I am engaged in research concerning Ōtepoti's Dance Community and looking at innovative ways in which to support and strengthen the dance sector here.

In the course of my research, I can confirm that there is a scarcity of adequate resource and space for dance provision and dance creation available to both the professional and wider community. The needs for functional dance rehearsal and performance space are not always fully understood or considered. I appreciate Jemma and the Dunedin Theatre Network's commitment to understanding the needs and circumstance of the dance community. With thorough consultation with the community, I believe this proposal would make a strong case for the provision of fit-for-purpose dance space in Ōtepoti.

**BLAISE & SARAH BARHAM
SAHARA BREEZE**

Sahara BreeZe Productions is an independent theatre production company and has been staging and touring theatre performances around Otago since 2019 and is dedicated to bringing live theatre to local communities.

Key productions have been a tour of 'Dear Lupin' by Roger and Charlie Mortimer in 2019, 'Two' by Jim Cartwright nominated for Outstanding Performers at Dunedin Fringe in 2020/2021, 'The New Real' a new verbatim piece about people's experiences during Covid 2020, 'Dracula – The Bloody Truth' by La Navet Bete in 2021, ShotGlass Shorts original play competition 2022 and a new devised play called 'Wonderful' written by Dunedin Playwright Richard Huber in 2022.



We are the directors of Angus Ltd trading as Sahara Breeze Productions.

Since moving full-time to Dunedin in early 2021 to continue further theatre studies at the University of Otago SBZ have presented productions at the New Athenaeum Theatre (TWO) 22-24 March 2021, The Mayfair -The Function Room – (TWO) 26 March 2021 , The Mayfair - Main Stage (DRACULA) – 11-14 Nov 2021 & The Playhouse (WONDERFUL) 10-12 Nov 2022.

The variety of these venues and their respective difference in audience sizes ranging from 50-400 seats has meant that we have been able to stage different plays in different venues depending on the style and budget of the production. This flexibility has enabled us to reach a wider and more diverse audience. We have seen the amount of volunteer work and investment required to keep these venues going. For example, the configuration of the NAT is not ideal for a Black Box theatre and the possibilities downstairs in the large space below are considerable. The Playhouse stage and backstage also needs renovating to make it more suitable for independent theatre companies to use. The Mayfair Theatre is a beautiful historic building but again needs investment to make it wheelchair accessible and improved backstage and for access for packing set into the space.

Since moving to Dunedin, I have seen the opportunities here for theatre growth in this region. The drama programmes in the local high schools are strong with good investment in facilities by those high schools and excellent results in various competitions. I have seen an excellent theatre program at the University of Otago and the numbers of students going through that program. This has encouraged me to join the Theatre New Zealand executive and help promote theatre both locally and nationally. However, I see a gap and a professional vacuum starting in Dunedin due to the demise of the Fortune Theatre. This has led to more independent theatre companies such as Dollhouse and our own, but I see many of the theatre students leaving Dunedin as there is not enough paid work here for them.

I believe that the nurturing and investment in these three facilities is essential as it continues to support theatre locally at a ground roots level particularly with youth, and also provides affordable venues for local independent theatre companies. However, I also see the need for a modern professional space that could be used by multiple companies as a future that these venues would feed people into. Both are essential.

Therefore, my recommendation is first investing in the venues that Dunedin already has to secure their future and then look to invest in a more modern state of the art professional theatre space longer-term. Both are required to sustain and enable growth in Dunedin.



School of Performing Arts

18 November 2022

Response from the Theatre Studies programme, University of Otago, to the Dunedin Theatre Venue Network proposal

This response is written in consultation with my colleagues in the Theatre Studies programme at the University; what follows reflects the views of the programme staff as a whole. I am writing primarily in my capacity as a professor of Theatre Studies: having previously been Head of the Theatre programme for 7 years (2006-12) and Head of the School of Performing Arts (2015-19), I return to the role of Head of programme in the New Year. However, like all my colleagues (some of whom are party to other submissions responding to the Dunedin Theatre Venue Network proposal), I am involved in professional theatre in the city: I am a trustee of Talking House and served on the board of the Fortune Theatre for 8 years (2006-14).

We are well disposed towards, and support, parts of the application by the three Dunedin venues for funding by the DCC. However, we are adamant that any financial support from the Council for refurbishing these venues should not come from, or jeopardise, the \$17million that the Council has earmarked for a dedicated professional theatre facility.

Playhouse

We are well disposed towards the Playhouse's application to the City Council to support its plans to refurbish their building. Theatre Studies has had close links with the Playhouse over many years. Students regularly participate in Playhouse productions in a range of roles, on- and backstage. Also, the Playhouse is a venue for other productions mounted by, or featuring, some of our graduates and enterprising senior students. Its size – if not necessarily its proscenium arch – makes it a suitable venue for modest, “fringe”-scale productions. In its current state, the operation and use of the theatre is severely compromised; a thorough refurbishment would make it a much more viable venue long-term. Of course, notwithstanding its occasional use for (semi-)professional productions, the Playhouse is fundamentally for amateur theatre; its refurbishment does not address the immediate, urgent need for a properly appointed professional venue of a viable size.

Athenaeum

Plans for the provision of new, attractive performance studios as part of the refurbishment of the Athenaeum would greatly enhance the city's theatre infrastructure. The flexibility of those spaces would cater for a range of professional and community theatre of a modest-scale much more satisfactorily than other small(ish) venues in Dunedin. So, we at Theatre Studies are well disposed to the redevelopment of the Athenaeum, but, again, we cannot endorse a proposal for Council support for this redevelopment at the expense of funding for a much more appropriate, medium-sized venue, such as that originally envisaged for the Athenaeum site in the wake of the Charcoalblue feasibility study.

Mayfair

Although the Mayfair provides a much larger audience capacity, it is fundamentally an unsatisfactory space for theatre, because of its architecture – its constrained proscenium-arch stage – and its acoustics, which are much better suited to music. The Mayfair is also too large to sustain viable professional theatre in a city the size of Dunedin. Transforming it into a truly satisfactory theatre would be an extremely expensive exercise, and that money surely would be better spent building either a new theatre or converting another building that is much more easily re-purposed.

Need for a Viable Professional Theatre Venue

The closure of the Fortune Theatre has been a great loss to the performing arts infrastructure of Dunedin, both because of the closure of a resident company with professional expertise and because of the loss of a 250-seat theatre. The Theatre Studies programme feels that loss keenly. We had established a collaboration with the Fortune, whereby co-productions were mounted biennially, enabling our senior students to perform and to undertake production roles alongside, and mentored by, professional practitioners. The collaboration also facilitated a variety of internships for students. Meanwhile, the absence of a well equipped, 250-300-seat theatre also means that our students – like audiences throughout the city – are deprived of the opportunity of seeing touring productions by top-level national theatre companies that are creating exciting, innovative art.

Therefore, in relation to the Dunedin Theatre Venue Network proposal, in the first instance we ask the DCC to honour its undertaking to fund a 250-300-seat theatre that is capable of being the nexus for producing high-quality professional theatre, as well as hosting visiting productions. If, beyond meeting that need, the Council can also make available additional funds to support the refurbishment of the Playhouse and the Athenaeum, we should be very pleased to see those projects proceed too.



Stuart Young
Professor of Theatre Studies

OPERA OTAGO

The Dunedin Opera Company Inc. (trading as Opera Otago) is New Zealand's longest-running opera company and has produced opera every year since the 1950s.



Opera Otago's main performance venue over this time has been the Mayfair Theatre which it gifted to The Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust to be developed as a community asset and be continually developed for future use.

Opera Otago is a launch pad for emerging artists and is often their first experience singing with a live orchestra. The Mayfair Theatre has an orchestra pit which can also be covered to extend the stage if required. The development of the Mayfair Theatre would add to the rejuvenation of South Dunedin and we advocate for its continued contribution to the cultural life in the area.

We often require the use of a piano making venue accessibility a major concern for us as costs are calculated on the difficulty of access. It is also important to our audience. Flat entry and alternative options to stairs would allow more of our community to experience the Arts.

The New Athenaeum Theatre has also been used by Opera Otago but the Playhouse Theatre has not. Having seen the current plans for both the Playhouse Theatre and New Athenaeum Theatre, it is clear that they would be venues we would look to make use of. They will be of significant benefit to Dunedin and the wider Arts community. We will follow all developments with great interest!

SOUTHERN LIGHTS

Southern Lights is a professional event production company providing solutions for lighting, rigging, staging, AV, power distribution, backline and crew



Southern Lights & Services Ltd supports the Dunedin Theatre Network proposal to refurbish the Playhouse Theatre, the Athenaeum and the Mayfair Theatre. The Playhouse and Mayfair theatre's have been the mainstay of community access to directly participate in live performance for many years.

From a technical perspective, and this includes lighting, audio, video, set installation, and operation, all the venues in this grouping have shortcomings that increase the labour cost of putting in professional productions. The Playhouse has presented well developed plans which recognise the need for safe, relatively flat access to the stage house. The proposed plans for the Athenaeum provide similar access. The one outlier is the Mayfair Theatre which currently has the most difficult stage house access which poses a medium H&S risk when installing productions. If access to the stage from a loading bay situated in one of the adjoining buildings can be established, along with a substantial upgrade of the stage house, the Mayfair will provide Dunedin with a modern, safe mid-sized theatre it urgently needs.

Many technical professionals have developed their early skills through these theatres, and if they are unable to refurbish, the city runs the risk of providing a reduced training opportunities and at worst a very low standard of safety in respect of the technical aspects of live performance.

These venues and the community will benefit greatly from formalised community (DCC) funding to allow them to increase their safety, flexibility and access for both community and professional live performance.

T h e a t r e N e w Z e a l a n d 
Te Pūtoi Whakaari o Aotearoa 

Theatre New Zealand supports the "Dunedin Theatre Network" initiative

Thousands of people work in theatre societies, schools, youth theatres and other organisations throughout Aotearoa-New Zealand; these groups need a voice.

Theatre New Zealand objectives:

- To promote New Zealand theatre.
- To encourage high standards in all aspects of theatre, including performance, production, staging, design and writing.
- To foster the appreciation and study of theatre in our communities.
- To act as a national consultative and advisory body in all aspects of theatre.
- To conduct or arrange courses, workshops, festivals or competitions on any element of theatre.

Giving performing arts a voice

Community Theatre builds connections and promotes and strengthens involvement and contribution.

The arts are making a difference in many ways. Community theatre uniquely brings people of diverse backgrounds together, building a better understanding of who we are and whom we cohabit with daily.

Education (Filling the gap)

Many schools don't have a budget that supports a robust performing arts programme, so students miss the opportunity to explore and grow. Community theatres in Aotearoa are filling the gap.

Venues

A community will prosper by offering a diverse range of performance spaces that meet the expectations of professional companies, community theatre companies, and those supporting the all-important youth and junior programs (Education). These spaces should be a safe environment for participants to learn, build and develop their creative skills.

Community theatre's uniqueness is how it rewards our societies with creative thinkers and develops better innovative skills, which can only create a better future for us all.



PAUL PERCY - BA MFA (CP)
President - Theatre New Zealand



Letter of support for the Dunedin Theatre Network

The Southern Heritage Trust strongly supports the Dunedin Theatre Network's proposal to retain and refurbish the Playhouse Theatre, Athenaeum & Mechanics Institute and Mayfair Theatre. All three buildings hold considerable historic value, and their continued use as theatres, by and for the local community, will be a valuable means of fostering appreciation of our city's rich heritage.

As a listed building, and one of the oldest surviving cinemas in the country, the Mayfair Theatre is particularly notable for its continued use as a theatre (albeit for live performances rather than films). Due to its long history as an entertainment and performance space, it also holds considerable social and cultural significance, particularly to the people of South Dunedin.

The Athenaeum & Mechanics' Institute, also a listed building, holds immense potential for adaptive re-use. It's fascinating history, prominent location and diverse heritage features make it an ideal candidate for a performance and arts space, as evidenced by the successful development of a performance venue within the building, and confirmed by the results of a recent feasibility study.

The Playhouse Theatre is another centrally-located heritage building with an interesting social history. It is particularly important because of the role it plays in making theatre accessible to young people. Refurbishment will allow this charming historic theatre to be appreciated by audiences and performers for generations to come.

We believe it is imperative that these three heritage buildings are retained as public spaces, and agree with the Dunedin Theatre Network that they should receive investment in order to enable their refurbishment and ensure their continued use by the community.

The Southern Heritage Trust is a charitable trust devoted to Otago's social, cultural, architectural and industrial heritage. Since 2002, we have advocated for threatened heritage structures and run events that celebrate our region's heritage, including the biennial Ōtepoti Dunedin Heritage Festival.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information.

Ruth Barton, Trustee
Southern Heritage Trust

OTAGO SCOUTING GANG SHOW

The Otago Scouting Gangshow is a production which is performed by Scouts and Guides from all over Otago and Central Otago every two years.

There is a cast of around 80 young people aged between 10 and 26 years old, with a further 120 volunteers supporting with the show backstage, including stage, lighting, sound, production, costume/wardrobe, administration, and choreography.

The show is held every 2 years, it runs for 5 nights with a matinee performance on Saturday afternoon. The show is a variety type skit show, often with an overall theme running through the show, this appeals to all age groups with something for everyone. The show continues to increase in popularity, with the 2021 show selling out 5 of the 6 shows which is a record for the Otago Gangshow and is really nice to see with so much competition from other mediums, and in a covid uncertain environment.

All the material is written by the directors who have been involved with the Gangshow for over 25 years, travelling from Te Anau to Dunedin every weekend for 4 months to take rehearsals in the lead up to the performances. The Gangshow provides a unique opportunity for young people to explore and develop new talents in a safe and supportive environment, some having never performed before, go on to successful careers in the arts.

The Otago Gangshow have a longstanding and strong relationship with the Mayfair theatre. The Mayfair allow us to move into the theatre a few weeks before performance week for rehearsals and final set building, this provides the youth with an exciting opportunity to experience the true theatre environment and feel comfortable with the stage and auditorium. The size of the Mayfair suits the performance well, it is large enough to create a big show atmosphere but not too big that it still provides some performance intimacy.

While the facility is perfect for Gangshow, and the relationship we have with the theatre allows us benefits we may not get elsewhere it is true that the facility is getting worn and tired. Operationally one of the biggest barriers we have faced in recent years are accessible facilities, we get many older people in our audience supporting the young relatives and we must carry wheelchairs up the stairs which is not always practical or safe. Also, it would be good to have more toilets available for patrons, this becomes a bottleneck at halftime, and can cause a delay to the start of the second act. Outside of that, we love the character of the theatre and would love to carry on our relationship with the Mayfair, introducing more young people to the arts, for many years to come.”





JASMAX
CHARCOALBLUE
THEATRICAL LIGHTS
DR. DORTA HANNAH

Image by Louise Poliki Bryant of performer Santee Smith from Blood Water Earth (Kaha.wi Dance Theatre)

Stage South Trust Board's

Response to:

The Current Three Theatres Proposal

The Stage South Charitable Trust was established in 2018 after the demise of the Fortune Theatre, to advocate for and promote professional theatre in Dunedin.

Stage South Charitable Trust Board:

Clare Adams (Chair)
Ross Johnston
Sara Georgie Tunoka
Simon Anderson
Karen Elliot



STAGE
SOUTH

Playhouse

We believe the Playhouse Theatre, along with the Globe Theatre, serves our community very well and should be supported in any way the DCC deems to be appropriate.

As well as professional organisations like Interact, these theatres and the personnel behind them have for decades provided an excellent avenue for those wanting to become engaged and grow in the theatre industry.

Athenaeum

We are astounded by the generosity of the owner of the Athenaeum building, Lawrie Forbes. He has a desire to make a significant contribution to the artistic character of the city.

There have been a number of permutations for performance spaces in the Athenaeum building. The latest suggest studio spaces that could accommodate audiences of 100 to 200.

The central city is well equipped with venues for large presentations in venues like the Regent and the Town Hall. There may be an argument for one more small theatre seating up to 200. **

However, any commercial or populist plays with fully realised set, lighting, sound, costume and a medium cast number could not be staged in this size of theatre for lack of room and would struggle to break even financially. This is why for almost five years no such play has been able to be produced by the city's professionals.

This is woefully inadequate in a city whose Arts and Culture Strategy states that it ... aims to position Dunedin as one of the world's great small cities for arts and culture, where creativity is fully integrated into the city's identity and recognised as essential to our future success.

Missing

A mid-sized flexible performance space for an audience of 300.

A theatre of this capacity would enable local practitioners to succeed in staging high-quality productions again for the city's thousands of previously regular and committed audiences and allow Dunedin to resume being part of the national theatre network of touring productions.

If a new design could create a medium sized space at the Athenaeum (ideally 300 seats) with an appropriate flexible stage area - and the developer, the DCC and OCT supported such a move – this could be an excellent outcome. A Charcoalblue concept drawing is seen on the cover as it may provide a starting point for further discussion of a cheaper but viable alternative.

** We already have a number of spaces in central Dunedin of a similar size that can be used for small artistic productions.

Mayfair

Location

Many people prefer a theatre located in the entertainment ecosystem of the city, ideally near the city's transportation hub and parking buildings. Currently this ecosystem is in and around the Octagon. That central location also helps support the local hospitality industry.

Acoustics

As it is, the acoustics in the theatre, while perfectly adequate for concerts performed with amplifiers, is poor for the spoken word. A total revamp could be needed to solve this problem. A quick 'makeover' wouldn't.

Currently it still offers an excellent location for live concerts, and this has been amply illustrated by sold out performances by the Oxo Cubans and Midge Marsden.

Climate Change

South Dunedin may face greater long-term problems in terms of climate change. The Charcoalblue report expressed concern that the basement and ground water flooding are deeply problematic.

Strategic Planning

The site does not align with the city's strategic plans.

Upside

Even though there are issues with the suggested upgrade of the Mayfair, the Stage South Board believes there are also some positives:

If discussing a full Performing Arts Centre, the Mayfair may have some advantages in that there is much more room to develop a space incorporating, for example, a wharehaka for Māori and Pasifika cultural performances, and a dance studio. Developing the Mayfair could also be part of South Dunedin's regeneration, including outward-facing amenities like a café and bar.

We would suggest that a project involving the use of the adjacent property also owned by the Mayfair is worth investigating.

This could be used as a location serving all of the theatrical interests in the city both community and professional, and incorporate, for example, a scenic workshop, rehearsal space(s), props storage and wardrobe.

It is clear though, that the venue needs much more than just a simple refurbishment to turn it into a true fully accessible flexible venue of around 300 seats with 21st century technology. It needs gutting, seismic strengthening and probably much more money spent on it than planned.

In December 2020, the estimated cost of refurbishment was thought to be in the vicinity of 30 million dollars. We assume the development of a more complete Performing Arts Centre with production hub on the full Mayfair site would escalate the capital expenditure involved.

231 Stuart Street

If a Performing Arts Centre is still the priority, then consideration could also be given to a revamped Fortune Theatre, but we believe such a move would require the purchase of the adjacent Moray Place property.

Professional Theatre and Venues

You will note that we have restricted this response to a discussion of venues.

A home for a professional theatre company is a different discussion for a different time.

Stage South Charitable Trust

25 Magnetic Street, Port Chalmers 9023

Tel: 027 698 4607

Email: stagesouth@gmail.com

Website: stagesouth.co.nz

STAGE
SOUTH

Wow! Productions Trust response to Dunedin Theatre Network discussion document

WHAT IS WOW!:

Wow! Productions Trust operates as a Charitable Trust set up to promote professional theatre in Ōtepoti/Dunedin. Founded in March 1996, Wow! is an association of actors, directors, writers, artists and designers who come together to stage, co-ordinate and promote professional plays, theatrical events, workshops and other artistic endeavours. For over twenty-five years, Wow! Has been Dunedin's foremost professional theatre collective with over thirty well-reviewed and award-winning productions to our name.

Current board: Martyn Roberts (Chair) Cindy Diver, Hilary Halba, Lisa Warrington, Donna Agnew (treasurer)

<https://wowproductions.nz/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wow!_Productions

RESPONSE TO DUNEDIN THEATRE NETWORK PROPOSAL

Wow! Productions has a number of recommendations based on the document provided by the Dunedin Theatre Network and informed by the hui on the evening of October 27th 2022. Firstly, we recommend that the Dunedin Theatre Network consider changing its name to the **Dunedin Theatre Venue Network**. The group's current name proves confusing as it sends the message that the group's interest is theatre *practice* rather than the proposal for renovating theatre *space/s*.

Wow! Productions have listened to arguments set out by the Dunedin Theatre Network, and we know this is a consortium of venues housing primarily amateur and community productions in Dunedin. The Dunedin Theatre Network has produced a plan with some limitations, intended to satisfy the needs of the groups and buildings involved. More information and design concepts are needed to advance the discussion.

While Wow! believes that these groups deserve support, it is also important to uphold both the spirit and the letter of the Charcoal Blue report's findings that led to the earmarking of \$17 million for the purpose of creating a new venue for **professional** theatre.

We believe that there should be a new 250-seat black box theatre created in Dunedin utilising the money that was set aside in the DCC's budget for this purpose.

Wow! also supports the idea of DCC funding towards a feasibility study by the Three Theatre Venue network to scope the design potential of the Athenaeum and Mayfair sites. It is clear that without concrete plans that are able to be discussed, the professional and wider theatre community is in a holding pattern. However, this feasibility funding should not come from the earmarked Theatre building fund.

A 250-seat semi-flexible theatre is an appropriate size both for local professional productions and for touring productions. Attendance figures for the 40-year history of the Fortune Theatre (a 250 seat theatre) show this to be the case. [See Appendix A: Alister McDonald's 'Fortune Theatre Company Most Popular Productions to 2015']. It does not entirely make sense to build a 350-seat theatre for the primary use of occasional touring groups throughout the year when a space of that size might very well be under-utilised for the majority of the year. [See Appendix B: 'McDonald Dunedin Theatre Venues Comments']

We believe that a designated theatre space is needed, not a multi-use space that can also be used as a general rule for music concerts, which can readily be housed in other extant Dunedin venues. (E.g. Glenroy Auditorium, Marama Hall, possibly the Mayfair). The acoustic profile of a spoken-word (or dance etc.) theatre space is different from that required by music groups.

THE PLAYHOUSE THEATRE PROPOSAL

Of the three venues discussed in the Dunedin Theatre Network document, Wow! can see value in the upgrade of the Playhouse Theatre. The cost for this upgrade is comparatively modest, and the Playhouse itself is in a favourable location close to restaurants and bars. The upgraded facilities (dressing rooms, public spaces) would mean the theatre could be appropriate for groups such as Wow! to hire from time to time for certain selected projects.

Questions regarding the Playhouse proposal:

However, we note that there is no business plan to provide any personnel (e.g. fire warden, tech support) to facilitate use of the space, especially if it were to be hired by any outside group. It should be a condition that public funding for upgrades comes with a guarantee and plan that the facility will be able to be hired with appropriate staffing in place.

If there were a professional group such as Wow! interested in hiring the space, this becomes unviable without agreement that one or more 'staff' be available – at a bare minimum - to open the premises and provide any health and safety measures required.

THE ATHENAEUM PROPOSAL

Following the meeting with the wider professional network in Dunedin on Oct 27 2022, it became clearer that the downstairs of the Athenaeum **could** be adapted to be a 250-seat venue with the potential for a 9m x 9m performance space and wings. It could also be supplemented by an upstairs space that could house 100-120 seats in the existing theatre (the New Athenaeum Theatre – hereafter NAT). These points Wow! regards as positive.

Questions regarding the Athenaeum proposal:

1. How does this proposed facility ensure that it is at best cost neutral, or can build towards being a sustainable professional economic model?
2. The missing component from this proposal is: how will this centre of creativity function and run?

A possible model to look at is **Q Theatre** in Auckland, which was supported in the planning and construction by the Auckland City Council but was overseen by a strong professional industry board/advisory group. It is currently run with a staff who ensure a year-round programme of works of a consistently high – and sustainable – professional standard and quality. There are technical staff, programming staff and a team who keep the Q Theatre venue running year round. Wow! recommends that the proposed 250-seat be run along similar lines.

It is vital therefore that if the Athenaeum is developed as the much-needed 250-seat professional venue, alongside the existing NAT, that it has on board a panel of industry advisors – and paid professional arts manager(s) – to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure (both technical and staffing) to make this venture work. Such an infrastructure is required both for local practitioners but to also connect this venue to the national touring circuit that currently often bypasses Dunedin (due to inadequate venues).

Further questions we must ask regarding the Athenaeum venue proposal include:

- i. Where does CNZ sit in on the future model for this venue? They must be at the table at the very least as partners in principle to a season of works annually, supplemented by touring shows.
- ii. Is the money available for the refurbishment of the theatre spaces in the precinct earmarked **only** for that space, so the DCC funding would only be available for the parts of the Athenaeum development devoted to theatre (therefore precluding the writer's room and other Athanaeum spaces)?
- iii. Would the owner (Lawrie Forbes) be expecting further funds through sponsorship or partnerships to complete construction? How is he expecting a return on his investment and is this sustainable for the users or will it push the costs too high?
- iv. Will the proposed writers who would be part of this creative hub be required to pay rent for the space (in which case, why would they use it at all?) or will the space be attached to a fellowship for writers?

Like the Playhouse, the Athenaeum is in a very favourable location, close to bars and restaurants.

The MAYFAIR THEATRE PROPOSAL

We are disappointed that representatives from the Mayfair Theatre – the most expensive of the three theatre proposed for development – did not attend the meeting on October 27th. The projected amount to refurbish the Mayfair Theatre is **well beyond any budget currently available**, and it is not clear to us what the improvements would be, nor how they would affect theatre in Dunedin. It also is not clear what the “heritage features” of the Mayfair theatre are. Considering that the building was designed to be a cinema exactly what of the converted stage space and layout can be considered ‘heritage’?

We cannot in any way support the notion that any of this earmarked 17 million be poured into the gaping jaws of financial deficit required to fully upgrade the Mayfair as it currently is. Is there discussion to be had about how this site could be of benefit to the larger theatre ecology? Yes there is, but more information and ideas need to be presented and worked on. Nothing to date has produced any meaningful aspiration.

CONCLUSION

Wow! Productions Trust recommends that:

1. The earmarked funds should be put to their intended purpose, which is to fund the creation of a viable 250-seat professional theatre venue, suitable for both local and national needs.

It must, however, be noted that such a building comes with ongoing staff costs, at a minimum:

- Production manager
- Box office manager
- Technical support

Such staffing exists in the Regent Theatre.

2. If any of the money that is earmarked for a 250-seat venue is to be put towards the Dunedin Theatre Venue Upgrades project, it can only happen as a condition of ALSO proceeding with the new 250-seat venue.
3. Wow! also recommends that a panel of theatre industry advisors be assembled to assist with the economic and technical modelling from the design phase onwards. The project and DCC may well want to consider the **Q Theatre** model.
<https://www.qtheatre.co.nz/about-us/history-q>

4. Wow! supports in principal that aid should be granted to upgrade the Playhouse, and towards the new design of the Athenaeum space. Further, if the Athenaeum is able to successfully create a viable 250-seat theatre, available for the purpose of local and national professional theatre practitioners, then we would most certainly look to support such a proposal as a possible solution to the issue of finding space for and building the 250-seat theatre for which we are strongly advocating.
5. Wow! emphatically does NOT support spending any of this pool of money on upgrading /propping up the current Mayfair Theatre model.

Appendix A:

**FORTUNE THEATRE COMPANY MOST POPULAR PRODUCTIONS TO 2015
BY SEATS SOLD (DUNEDIN)**

Four Flat Whites in Italy – Roger Hall (2009)	6,606
The Share Club – Roger Hall (1987)	6,491
Ladies Night – Sinclair / McCarten (1992)	5,825
Love Off the Shelf – Roger Hall (1986)	5,612
Social Climbers – Roger Hall (1995)	5,604
Spreading Out – Roger Hall (2005)	5,486
Conjugal Rites – Roger Hall (1990)	5,400+
Cinderella – Roger Hall (2006)	5,327
Ladies Night II – Sinclair/McCarten (1993)	5,101
The Sex Fiend – Sinclair / Mulheron (1990)	5,020
Calendar Girls – Tim Firth (2012)	4,972
After the Crash – Roger Hall (1988)	4,884
By Degrees – Roger Hall (1993)	4,839
Aladdin – Roger Hall (2007)	4,679#
Noises Off – Michael Frayn (1983)	4,577
Avenue Q – Lopez, Marx, Whitty (2011)	4,531#
Market Forces – Roger Hall (1996)	4,522
Cinderella – Roger Hall (1978)	4,463
Jack and the Beanstalk – Roger Hall (2008)	4,442#
Foreskin’s Lament – Greg McGee (1981)	4,424
Larnach – Michelanne Forster (1994)	4,360
You Can Always Hand Them Back – R Hall (2013)	4,301
Take a Chance on Me – Roger Hall (2001)	4,254
Hot Water – Roger Hall (1983)	4,204
Charley’s Aunt – Brandon Thomas (1997)	4,177
Boeing Boeing – Marc Camelotti (2013)	4,159
A Shortcut to Happiness – Roger Hall (2011)	4,147#
Prisoners of Mother England – Roger Hall (1980)	4,120
Dirty Dusting – Ed Waugh / Trevor Wood (2008)	4,110#
Who Wants to be 100? – Roger Hall (2008)	4,073#
The Twits – David Wood / R. Dahl (2007)	4,011

Glide Time – Roger Hall (1977)	[4,000]*
Dirty Weekends – Roger Hall (1997)	3,769
Steaming – Nell Dunn (1989)	3,759
Shop Till You Drop – Quigan / Gumbley (2000)	3,706
Foreskin’s Lament – Greg McGee (1986)	3,696
The 39 Steps – Patrick Barlow (2010)	3,659#
Red Riding Hood – Roger Hall (2010)	3,578#
James and the Giant Peach – Wood / Dahl (2008)	3,527#
Middle Age Spread – Roger Hall (1978)	3,524
The Frog Prince – Sarah Somerville (2010)	3,430#
Book Ends – Roger Hall (2014)	3,415
Love off the Shelf – Roger Hall (1987)	3,362
The Witches – David Wood / R. Dahl (2006)	3,346
Les Liaisons Dangereuses – C. Hampton (1988)	3,259
The Importance of Being Earnest – Wilde (1981)	3,241
Fifty Fifty – Roger Hall (1981)	3,211
Teechers – John Godber (1990)	3,197
Flatmates Wanted – Colin McCulloch (1993)	3,196
The Motor Camp – Dave Armstrong (2012)	3,195
Othello – William Shakespeare (2004)	3,184
Nunsense – Dan Goggin (1990)	3,095
Girls Night Out – Dave Simpson (1999)	3,059
The Wind in the Willows – Alan Bennett (2002)	3,017

complimentary included

By Genre:

Roger Hall – 26 (includes 3 musical productions and 5 pantomimes)

Comedies – 16 (Other NZ authors – 6; UK – 9; France – 1)

Musicals – 2

Classic Costume Drama – 1

Shakespeare – 1

Drama – 3 (both plays by NZ authors)

Family – 5 (NZ author -1; UK authors – 4)

ATTENDANCES BETWEEN 2,000 AND 3,000 (List Indicative, not Exhaustive)

Who Needs Sleep Anyway? (Roger and Pip Hall)	2,972
Macbeth – William Shakespeare (2002)	2,914
Angry Housewives (musical)	2,853
The Foreigner – Larry Shue	2,830
Taking Off – Roger Hall	2,796
The Jungle Book – Martin Howells	2,778
The Vagina Monologues	2,770
Whose Life is it Anyway? – Brian Clarke	2,751
The Graduate – Terry Johnson	2,714

Making it Big – Roger Hall	2,706
A Perfect Wedding – Robin Hawdon	2,671
The Diary of Ann Frank	2,647
Hamlet – William Shakespeare	2,636
Deathtrap – Ira Levin	2,611
The Farm – David Geary	2,548
Much Ado About Nothing – Shakespeare	2,513
Mary Stuart – Schiller	2,485
Shotgun Wedding – Joe Musaphia	2,469
The Taming of the Shrew – Shakespeare	2,468
A Christmas Carol	2,462
Stepping Out – Richard Harris	2,369
Kiwifruits – Carl Nixon	2,315
The Hansard Show – Roger Hall	2,277
Just Between Ourselves – Alan Ayckbourn	2,234
Always...Patsy Cline (musical)	2,232
My Heart is Bathed in Blood – M Forster	2,206
I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change	2,170
Pack of Girls – David Geary	2,162
The Learner's Stand – David Geary	2,134
A Slice of Saturday Night (musical)	2,127
Ashes – David Rudkin	2,117
Mum's Choir – Alison Quigan	2,082
Lend Me a Tenor – Ken Ludwig	2,064
State of the Play – Roger Hall	2,000

MOST POPULAR STUDIO PLAYS

(SEATS SOLD)

Weed	3,221	(2 productions)
The Glass Menagerie	3,125	(3 productions)
Shirley Valentine	2,384	(2 productions)
Barmaids	2,338	(2 productions)
Kaz: A Working Girl	2,157	(2 productions)
Tomfoolery	1,970	(2 productions)
Oleanna	1,913	(1 production)
The Daylight Atheist	1,696	(1 production)
Paddington Bear	1,652	(1 production)
When I Was a Girl...	1,512	(1 production)
Gulls	1,483	(1 production)
Three Tall Women	1,455	(1 production)
A Paintbox of Clowns	1,440#	(1 production)
Bombshells	1,399	(1 production)
Stretchmarks	1,351	(1 production)
The Three Little Pigs	1,333#	(1 production)
Tribes	1,314	(1 production)
Billy Bishop Goes to War	1,175	(2 productions)

Why Are My Parents So Boring?	1,144	(1 production)
The Shape of Things	1,118	(1 production)
Life with the Lions	1,090	(2 productions)
Lashings of Whipped Cream	1,034	(2 productions)
After Dinner	1,000	(1 production)

(modest) complimentaries included

Appendix B:

Alister McDonald.

Comments Following the Dunedin Theatre Venues Network Meeting at the Playhouse.

For 34 years I was the Dramaturg at the Fortune Theatre. I also served on the Fortune Theatre Trust Board for 35 years and was its Secretary for 25 years. I have acted professionally intermittently in theatre and television in Dunedin since 1970 and directed professionally intermittently since 1985. I have a Master of Literature degree from the University of Otago and my thesis topic combined theatre history and dramatic literary criticism. I have tutored Drama at both the University and the Southern Performing Arts Centre. I offer the following comments having listened to the discussion at the meeting convened recently at the Playhouse.

Professional Theatre Venue

If the \$17m was tagged for a professional theatre facility to replace the Fortune at Trinity then that is what it should be put towards. It is quite clear to me that both the Playhouse and Mayfair could only benefit by having money spent on them (and the Playhouse plans as outlined at the 27 October meeting sounded well considered) but any such money needs to come from some other Council fund.

A truly professional theatre facility capable of attracting a regular audience carries with it expectations of professional level Front of House service and audience comfort. The two cinema multiplexes in the city far exceed in terms of the latter any of the live theatre or concert auditoria here. To compete successfully for the entertainment dollar today the quality of the theatrical experience off the stage as well as on it must be at a 21st century level. The legislative requirements around matters such as Health and Safety have also grown to such a degree that only professional management (and governance) of any facility built or modified as a professional theatre venue should be contemplated and this brings with it ongoing expenditure commitments which need to be factored in to the planning.

It would be my expectation, based on my years of involvement with the Fortune, that for the foreseeable future a facility seating 250 would be adequate for a Dunedin-based professional theatre company. I am aware of the argument that promoters of mid-scale touring and festival events would prefer 350 seats given their need to maximise income over a short performance period. I would not be opposed to the larger seating capacity being available (though it almost certainly means a greater cost for the project) provided that the facility could be scaled down (perhaps by draping off part of the auditorium) to the lower figure that would more typically be all that was required.

I am aware that there has been discussion of the idea of the Court Theatre in Christchurch serving as the South Island's professional theatre company and touring its productions to Dunedin on a regular or semi-regular basis. For this proposal to become reality (and in the current absence of a Dunedin-based company it may have merit) the Dunedin professional theatre facility would need to be configured in such a way as to enable this to happen. It is pointless building a theatre in the round here if the Court is going to continue with an end stage in its new purpose-built facility.

I understand the call for a flexible performance space (but note the costs associated with such flexibility in the case of Auckland's Q Theatre). However, in my view this flexibility must include the option of the theatre of illusion, not solely presentational mode. That means that an end stage space with wings and (dismountable) proscenium (or drape equivalent) must be a configuration that is available to those users who want it.

Demand for a Professional Dramatic Theatre Company in Dunedin

The professional dramatic theatre in the city, once the Fortune was properly established, was outselling the audiences at all NZSO / DSO concerts combined, all the RNZB and touring modern dance companies' presentations combined, the Chamber Music season, all drama and opera presented by amateur groups, and usually all musicals presented by amateur groups. (I am omitting school presentations from this discussion.) This was the case even in the Fortune's less successful years. It is simply incorrect to claim that the city lacked an audience of sufficient size to support a professional repertory theatre. A professional dramatic theatre should not be seen as 'nice to have' but as an essential in a city of this size and with the literary and dramatic heritage that Dunedin has. If Palmerston North with little more than half Dunedin's population can sustain a professional operation at Centrepont then there is no reason why Dunedin cannot have year-round professional theatre restored for the benefit and enjoyment of its citizens.

Conclusion

In the absence of a superior proposal (and I personally am still of the view that Sammy's might provide that option, and address the separate mid-scale music venue issue, given sufficient funding being made available) it seems to me that the Athenaeum project, if it can be modified to incorporate a 250-seat auditorium and addresses the matters raised in paragraphs 5 and 6 above, should be pursued. I think that once there is a venue in prospect it is then more likely that serious proposals for a professional dramatic theatre company to replace the Fortune will emerge.

Alister McDonald
1 November 2022

