

# 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.

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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 14<sup>th</sup> Dunedin Arts Festival in 2024.

Ngā mihi



**Charlie Unwin**  
Festival Director

**Christine McNamara**  
Festival Chair

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**To Whom it May Concern,**

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

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

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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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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](mailto:office@theatreworks.co.nz)  
Web: [www.interactdrama.co.nz](http://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](mailto:helen@mtnz.co.nz) [www.mtnz.co.nz](http://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, backstage, 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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. DORITA HANNAH

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

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# Stage South Trust Board's

Response to:

## The Current Three Theatres Proposal

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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



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# 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.

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# 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.

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## 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.

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

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# Mayfair

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## Strategic Planning

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

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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**Stage South Charitable Trust**

25 Magnetic Street, Port Chalmers 9023

Tel: 027 698 4607

Email: [stagesouth@gmail.com](mailto:stagesouth@gmail.com)

Website: [stagesouth.co.nz](http://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](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 21<sup>st</sup> 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  
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