

'CELESTIAL CITIES' Seminar
A new way of thinking about venues...

INTRODUCTION

Just over two years ago I suggested to the (then) Ministry for Culture and the Arts that it would be valuable to stimulate the debate about Perth venues by running a conference on the design of such spaces. A committee was formed to discuss the idea and contained representatives not only from the Ministry but also from UWA, the RAIA and ArtsWA. Some research was carried out with arts organisations, architects and local authorities and the value of the idea grew. With a change in state government the idea was put on hold for a while but re-emerged in a simpler form at the suggestion of the Department for the Arts (DCA) and as a component of the 2002 PIAF Celestial Cities event. I was delighted to be invited to assemble a group of speakers but even more delighted when the DCA invited the newly formed Institute of Independent Arts Consultants (IIAC) to manage the event – adding profile for the IIAC to its own launch a few days later. This document contains papers presented by the speakers at the seminar on February 9th 2002 at the AGWA Theatre and in the presence of the Hon Sheila McHale MLA Minister for Culture and the Arts. Graham Walne. Chairman Institute of Independent Arts Consultants. April 2002.

Biographies of the speakers (in order of speaking)

Graham Walne

Graham Walne is an internationally respected lighting designer, theatre consultant, author and vocational training specialist. He has led over 80 theatre consultancy projects (including as part of the design team for the rebuilding of Shakespeare's Globe), is a Gordon Reid Fellow and the co-founder and chair of the Institute of Independent Arts Consultants.

Sally Richardson

Sally Richardson has worked as a director, performer and writer of both drama and dance works for both WA and national tours: she has also produced a variety of programs for ABC Radio. In 1993 she was seconded to Sydney Theatre Company as Co-artistic Director of Playworks. She is currently Director of Stages, WA Playwrights' Consortium.

Dick Donaldson

Dick Donaldson is a Director and Principal of Donaldson + Warn architects which has received numerous design awards. He has lectured and/or tutored design extensively at Curtin University, UWA and also in Melbourne. He is an Honorary Research Fellow, University of Western Australia for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (2000).

Cat Hope

Cat Hope is a musician, composer and performance artist and she has also directed short films and music theatre shows. Her work is known worldwide. She won the Pandora's Box Film Festival Best Score award in 2000 and one of her films was recently nominated at the Italian Independent Video Awards.

Tom Lubin

Tom Lubin is Head of Training at The Film and Television Institute and has designed and written courses in event management. He has a strong interest in the use of advanced technology in the arts. Tom has a BA in Interdisciplinary Creative Arts from the University of Calif-San Francisco, and an Honours Master in Communication Studies from the University of Western Sydney.

'To Look Forward, First Look Back' by Graham Walne

Theatres have existed for thousands of years and there are thousands around the world, an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of these can help inform future venues.

Before the Twentieth Century first drama and then music tended become the predominant form of the performing arts. Consequently the forestage of the playhouse slowly became the orchestra pit of the opera house and performers retreated behind the picture frame. Wagner's Opera House at Bayreuth took the rich out of the boxes and placed them in a single democratic block, anticipating cinema design and creating the blank side walls it took nearly a century to "paper with people" again.

In earlier centuries most 'public' buildings were constructed on the classical theory of geometry and although it is fashionable today to denigrate this rationale, it's application can still highlight assets and liabilities in contemporary designs. Inarguably however good acoustics depend on good proportions.

The Twentieth Century saw a reduction in arts patronage and the growth of planned subsidy. Consequently, drama and music, both established and contemporary, became more generally available. To house this range the Twentieth Century therefore began to see a greater variety of venues, even reviving the Greek amphitheatre, the Elizabethan 'Wooden O' and the Courtyard.

Multipurpose venues were rare before the Twentieth Century and controversial thereafter, especially if the design brief was not clear about the expectations and inevitable compromises. Despite the tag "suitable for everything but good for nothing", some (but not all) productions can benefit from the experimental nature of flexible and adaptable spaces.

Theatre provides both participation and observation. Formerly the audiences' reaction is essential to help the actors focus and can only be successful if the audience perceives few physical barriers between themselves and the actors. Latterly sightlines need be directed so that the audience can enjoy the best impact of the picture which is being laid before them.

The future of heritage buildings which cannot be destroyed poses a dilemma and the easy response is to make it an arts centre. Housing the arts needs to be more sophisticated than this. Whilst heritage buildings are familiarly located and possess helpful 'ghosts' of earlier audiences, they can also be expensive to maintain and to elevate to contemporary standards of access and comfort. (However, refurbished venues can also attract more people than before). By-contrast, whilst modern buildings can often lack atmosphere they can also offer value and excitement. So, old and new are not mutually exclusive but can work side by side.

Contemporary architecture can create buildings which are themselves at least as attractive as what they are designed to contain. Familiar icons such as Utzon's Sydney Opera House, Ghery's Bilbao Gallery, Lloyd-Wright's New York Guggenheim and Pai's Paris Louvre-Pyramid all attract people who otherwise might never have gone near the arts. But whilst Icons Can Optimise Numbers, Icons Can Overtake Needs.

Therefore theatres must be designed from the inside out, not the reverse so flytowers shouldn't be dropped just because they're awkward to conceal. The single most important aspect to theatre design is the relationship between the performer and the audience, get that right and it almost doesn't matter what else is wrong: get that wrong, and it almost doesn't matter what else is right.

Today's diversity in both population and product can only be supported by a diversity in venues, and that can only be achieved through a strategy so that resources are properly focussed. This process, and the design of the venues which results, needs to involve both artists and architects and allow time for initial concepts to be explored and rejected. A balance is needed (perhaps through the perspective of the theatre consultant) because venues outlive companies and short or medium term tastes should not be satisfied at the expense of longer term visions.

Theatres aren't cinemas. Theatre audiences need to see each other if they are to participate collectively. Conversely, cinema audiences comprise individual spectators unconcerned until later whether their neighbour has enjoyed the film. Cinemas have increased audiences' expectation of comfort but in theatres the level of comfort should vary. For example, luxury seating might be a deterrent to a young audience interested in the radical and conversely benches or hard chairs could be equally off-putting to a mature audience for classical dance and opera.

The dimensions of the seat, the distance of one row from another and the location of the aisles can have a dramatic effect on the footprint of the auditorium. Long uninterrupted rows with side aisles could push the rear row much further back than had the rows been shorter and interrupted with aisles. Significantly more leg room means a significantly bigger auditorium, significantly more expensive to build and to run. In studies for the national theatres of both the USA and the UK it was determined that the rear rows (for drama) should not be further from the stage than 16 to 20m. Most of what is considered the best drama has been produced in small spaces with distances less even than these.

Theatre in the past seem to have been adventurous in adopting new inventions. The Victorians quickly embraced gas then electric light, both of which had far-reaching impacts on audience behaviour, scenic design and acting. The cantilever too helped enlarge buildings and improve sightlines. What of today's technology?

Trailers entice and inform cinema audiences but theatre is a risk by comparison. Can technology help marketing here? Can the use of seat-back screens [now in use at New York's Metropolitan Opera] replace expensive (and often unprofitable) programmes and projected translations? Can these be used to aid conferences and provide instant replays and other information? Lightweight materials have transformed the construction and building of circus tents, could they be useful in Australia's climate for more outdoor or portable venues?

Can the kind of adjustable seats found in cars and aircraft improve comfort without increasing distances? Can 3D projected holographic scenery introduce a new cost-effective dynamic to performance?

Theatre has always been deemed at risk from technology - first television, then Cinemascope and now the home theatre. But, where theatre was once the world of illusion, in today's world of digital trickery it tells fewer lies. Unlike its competitors, theatre offers uniqueness because by being live every performance is unrepeatable. Theatre possesses the sole ability to send the audience home thinking they shared in something special. A judicious use of proven architecture and new technology could result in even more exciting spaces.

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'Architecture, actor and audience', Iain Mackintosh, Routledge 1993

'The Oxford Companion to the Theatre', edited by Phyllis Hartnoll, Oxford University Press, 1983.

Sally Richardson

Keith Gallasch, Editor of the national broad sheet REALTIME, recently observed that:

"While most major arts companies of Australia provide expensive entertainment to those who can afford it, it is the smaller creators who are the innovators, uniquely representative of Australia culture and much more likely to be welcomed and applauded overseas. In most other states of Australia, companies of this scale desperately await the justice that will give them decent working conditions and homes in which work can be consistently developed".

There is no doubt in my mind as a working practitioner in the performing arts in WA that we need to re-think what, where and how audiences experience live performance. We have a unique opportunity here in WA to reconceptualize performance spaces, at a time when the arts is undergoing significant change in its incorporation of new media, in the development of planning, in the critical appreciation of our audiences, and of course that ubiquitous concept - funding of the Arts. In planning for the future, a future that explicitly acknowledges and embraces WA audiences, I believe that we can conceive and develop our direction informed by the successes and failures of new venues both nationally and internationally.

Before proceeding, I believe it is necessary to define what is meant by 'small to medium performing arts sector'. This is the largest group of stakeholders in the performing arts and represents diverse forms and genres, service organisations, individuals and groups. They also represent much of the direct investment to artists by both the Australia Council and ArtsWA in terms of innovation and experimentation in contemporary arts practice. I state the obvious when I state that much of the funding to this sector is on a project by project basis. This means that funding remains fluid and is not tied down necessarily to a particular company or organisation.

The success of venues such as Victorian Arts Centre, Adelaide Festival Centre, CUB Malthouse in Victoria, The Wharf Complex the home of The Sydney Theatre Co, as both cultural centres and tourist icons is obvious. Cultural centres that invite audiences both nationally and internationally dominate city landscapes. Such centres move beyond being visited by people to see or participate in a single cultural event, be it a play, a ballet or a one man show, to be icons symbolising the life of the city itself. They represent diverse interests from those of industry and the business community, and ultimately become tourist icons and attractions in their own right. Hence it is not enough to see the Sydney Dance Company perform 'anywhere' the experience is infinitely enhanced by seeing the performance at the Sydney Opera House, in Sydney. At the Wharf complex one might well eat a fabulous meal at their restaurant overlooking the harbour before seeing the latest new Australian play or classic adaptation by Barry Kosky presented by the Sydney Theatre Company. At the Malthouse in Melbourne it may well be a cafe meal, a drink at the bar, a gallery viewing before taking in the latest cutting edge work by Playbox Theatre company or any of the numerous other local and national companies that perform in either of the two theatres in this complex.

In today's discussion I intend focusing on two of the most recent and arguably most successful examples of 'new' venues in Brisbane Qld that provide infrastructure and management to the small to medium performing arts sector while also providing a range of services to the wider community, business and additional stakeholders. These 'new' venues The Brisbane Powerhouse and the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts are in fact not so 'new' rather they are adaptations of existing structures that have re-invented themselves to become multi-functional, multi-artform, and multi-generational in terms of attracting and maintaining diverse audiences.

I preface my appraisal of these other venues by emphasising that I am not personally advocating that WA needs to take up the adaptation of a Powerhouse or former Bushells tea and Coffee factory with equal enthusiasm. Rather that we can critically appraise these venues as examples of what can be made possible if planning, discussion and commitment is made to the creation of a new venues and arts spaces.

'Dream Complex' is the title of Keith Gallasch's article in the Dec issue of Realltime on the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, and it seems an appropriate example in our own context. That the actual materialisation of such an exciting new complex is obviously for Queenslanders a 'dream come true' ,while over this side of the country here in equally sunny WA it can feel an 'impossible dream' .What I would like to emphasise is that both Qld venues are not new monolithic structures in deserts of sand surrounded by oceans of car-parking, but the clever adaptation of existing buildings in developing metropolitan areas where people live, work, shop and eat.

The benefits to the small to medium performing arts sector are obvious.....Too often small project companies and individual artists as funding recipients are made to effectively become independent producers of their own work. Their ability to produce, present and market their product effectively to capitalise on the investment made by the funding organisation is less of a concern to the artist, naturally you would suggest, than is the creation of quality art/performance...Too often this sector presents its work in for-hire spaces that may or may not be known to their audience, if they can find an appropriate venue at all...They receive little or no supportive venue management or production support, and often if we are honest and to put it politely) play to less than capacity houses. The ongoing future or touring potential for the more critically successful works is rarely realised and the artist limps on from project to project, small grant to.. no grant....The creation of multi-functional, multi-artform spaces with quality management & marketing infrastructure, up to date information access, and with established audiences provides an obvious and direct antidote to this current state of affairs..(We are all awaiting the up and coming results of the federal inquiry into the small to medium performing arts sector for further confirmation!!)

Lets consider the performing artists and organisations that use or are housed in these multi-purpose and multi-functional venues. The recently opened Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts is home to 7 Brisbane based contemporary arts companies and organisations: IMA (Institute of modern Art), Expressions Dance Company, Rock n Roll Circus, Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts, ELLISON new music Ensemble, AFTRS (Australia Film, Television Radio School, QLD branch), and The Arterial Group (a contemporary performance co). They are all residents of what is essentially 2 buildings fused into one, the front building situated on a busy main road, lined with shopfronts. It is located on the edge of Fortitude valley in Brisbane near the densely populated 'New Farm' with its 25-40 age demographic. JWCCA (as its called!) houses 3 gallery spaces, 2 workshops and 3 furnished artist studios for the IMA alone. It has purpose built offices and a flexible theatre space (200), a large dance studio (60) along with other studio spaces, live in artist studios, security, workshops, loading dock, freight lift. and also storage space!! At a cost of \$15.25 m it provides a well appointed home for arts companies where they can develop new work, sustain extant work, teach, workshop, have artists truly in residence and be accessible to other artists and the public....a complex production house, which represents a model to other Australian states.

Just minutes away by car is the other most recent venue addition to the Qld arts scene: The Brisbane Powerhouse. With my next example I quote from a paper given by Chris Bowen at the Sixth International Conference on Arts and Cultural management. Brisbane Powerhouse _ Centre for Live Arts: A case Study.

A \$22 Millennium project initiative of the Brisbane City Council, The Brisbane Powerhouse opened in May 2000 and has been described as one of Australia's most dynamic, innovative and flexible arts centres. It has in a short space of time become nationally recognised as an excellent example of adaptive reuse and is highly regarded in the arts industry as a key player in Australian contemporary arts practice. It is the city's second largest performing arts centre after Queensland performing arts centre and provides affordable, high energy ,accessible contemporary arts activities in an environment that is people centered and Brisbane focused. Its facilities include:

- * 400 seat fully equipped flexible studio theatre,
- * 200 seat theatre with thrust stage, studio for rehearsals and small performances.
- * Performance platform in turbine hall
- * rehearsal rooms
- * cafe and Bar
- * offices for four arts organisations
- * External performance areas
- * Public car park.

Other key features include its riverside and parkland location, open and accessible design inviting exploration of public spaces and viewing levels, and large interactive public artworks located throughout the centre.

Along with its significant role as a presenter of the arts It is used as a venue for events, functions, conferences, film shoots and is an attractive cultural tourism and visitor destination. In the last twelve months its facilities have been used by organisations and individuals

for performances by Qld Theatre Co, Glynn Nicholas, & Judith Lucy, Wog Story to a range of contemporary work significantly from the small to medium performing arts sector: La Boite Theatre Co, Rock N Roll Circus, Vulkana Womenis Circus, Frank Theatre, Zen Zen Zo Performance group, & Access Arts as well as an ongoing utilisation of the venue by Qld University of technology and the University of Southern Qld.

Attendance and activity statistics for the first twelve months of operation are illustrative of its success: with over 60,000 people attending performances, 350 performances of 60 productions, some 200 functions, 12 installations and exhibitions, 40,000 people attending free and community access events, 25,000 casual visitors, over 120,000 precinct visitors with approx 2600 people visiting the centre each week.

Current General manager and initial project development officer for the re-development, Chris Bowen, offers ten management insights that suggest what can be learnt from the Powerhouse experience and a key perhaps to its current success.

1. Extensive research and business planning was undertaken to inform the re-development. A feasibility study was undertaken by Brisbane Council in 1997, A Business plan was delivered by Dec 1998, and revised with extensive input in Dec 1999.

2 Establishment and extensive consultation with the arts community. Researchers consulted widely in the arts community to identify facilities sought by practitioners and companies and establish patterns for demand and use. This process built a substantial mandate for the centre in the arts community who felt empowered by the process and created a sense of ownership of the facility.

3. The third is a vision, artistic policy and program unique to arts centres in Australia. There is a focus on both contemporary and community arts practice, a commitment to innovation, multi-artform practice, arts development, critical debate and cultural exchange. Significantly the powerhouse is meeting a substantial demand from small and medium scale performance companies for affordable, flexible contemporary arts venues. Companies who haven't previously had access to good infrastructure can build their skills in residencies, and develop and present work in an environment where the performance can design the space and not the other way round.

4. development of strong partnerships with artists, arts companies, tertiary arts institutions and commercial providers.

5. establishment of a clearly defined market positioning differentiated from competitors and maximizing comparative advantages. For example a consistent contemporary look has been maintained in all print production, the website & direct mail. Affordable pricing and policies are in place to attract younger audiences. The box office represents a viable alternative to other ticketing services.

6. An emphasis on new technologies and its importance in successfully attracting a younger demographic to the centre, along with recognition of the increasing importance of new technologies in contemporary popular culture.

7. A corporate structure suited to the arts industry in which the centre operates.

8 A small management and staff team that is multi-skilled, entrepreneurial, flexible, and market and industry driven.

9. A strategic alignment with Brisbane City Council.

10. The complex itself. The buildings combine raw industrial aesthetic and clean modernity that is appealing, attractive and welcoming in its location, flexibility, accessibility, affordability and innovation. The integrated facilities support a range of activities rarely found on one site. It is without doubt that an attractive, superbly located, well designed facility is a huge advantage in developing business success. A potentially extraordinary asset in the shaping of our future cultural landscape.

Overwhelmed? never....inspired? most certainly. Inevitably our situation here in WA is different...Creative and open thinking is the beginning of this process. Visualizing and exploring the possibilities, collaboration across the artforms and with business, the community and government is the only option and a necessity. I would like to encourage that we look at ways we can revision, adjust and adapt the spaces and venues we currently have so they are utilised to their maximum potential. I believe sincerely it is not about building the new in any literal sense, we already have one hideous new monument to arts, culture and community as a leftover of the arts vision of the previous government!

New directions are critical if Western Australia intends to capitalise on the assets it already has. In terms of location, a central location in the existing arts precinct has much to recommend it. However, we can also utilise perceived venues at the so-called margin such as Mandurah PAC and Joondalup, more effectively, continuously and consistently.

The benefits of a management team that develops strategic alignments and partnerships across sectors, from business to local government are too many to list. Suffice to say such a management team would be driven by the dual (although sometimes conflicting) needs of both audiences and arts industry. The combining of infrastructure and management services to a range of organisations in addition to an effective ongoing programming and marketing of venues is also readily achievable. An integrated approach would inevitably result in more audiences across metropolitan Perth including the outer lying suburbs enjoying contemporary Western Australian art. At the very least a dialogue between the public and performing arts on the real and lived meaning of art within the community can commence.

An artistic vision and policy framework must encompass the varying needs and aspirations of the sector. One of the stumbling blocks for the small to medium size performing arts sector is that there is currently little scope for growth. Any artistic vision must include mechanisms whereby local talent can be fostered in WA.

It is of course easy to put together a wish list, a wish list that we know none of us could afford!! It is also possible to imagine and dream a uniquely West Australian artistic vision that materialises and becomes real for the artists and the wider community that live and work and experience the arts and culture here in WA.

I have no definitive vision to proffer. As a practitioner in the field, as a recipient of grants for one-off projects, as a part-time director of a small to medium arts service organisation, I have suggestions that I hope facilitate passionate debate and contribute to an artistic vision that looks beyond the next year to a future to which we all aspire.

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'Urban Issues: Theatres in the City' by Dick Donaldson

INTRODUCTION

- Theatre is traditionally live human performance. It is the expression of human relationships, events and dreams

DIVERSITY

- To provide for the diversity of any modern city a variety of well-equipped performance spaces are needed. They can be grouped in purpose built complexes like the Rome Auditorium in Italy by Renzo Piano that combines three different capacity theatres sited around a central forecourt and amphitheatre or individual theatres spread throughout a city such as Perth.
 - The advantage of a variety of performance spaces in the city allows for a range of experiences obtained from
 - the performance
 - the location
 - the type of venue and its facilities
 - the scale
 - the 'feel' of the interior and exterior spaces
 - how it fits into the surrounding urban condition
 - A theatre adjoining a river foreshore, or projecting out into the water like the Sydney Opera House, has a different character (and 'feel') than one located in the central built-up city. A 'stand-alone' project is generally located on a special site and needs to provide its own infrastructure (café, restaurants, shops, etc) whereas an inner city example can provide greater diversity of surrounding infrastructure.
 - With a variety of venues each theatre experience can be different.
 - Theatre architecture should be expressive, engage the patron's senses and help elevate each stage of the event.
 - The act of going to the theatre should be memorable: the arrival, entry, waiting, performance, intermission, performance and departure should all stimulate the mind and senses. A special theatre going experience was created at Il Teatro del Mondo designed by Aldo Rossi as a floating theatre for the Venice Biennale. A traditional plan and form has been conceptually liberated from a standard solution by its construction on a large barge from lightweight materials and temporarily moored at the entrance to the Grand Canal.
 - An appropriately scaled urban space adjoining a theatre can help integrate a public building into the surrounding urban context and develop an informal relationship between the interior and exterior. A lively forecourt can accommodate street theatre and other public events that add to the richness and life of the city. A world renowned example is the Pompidou Arts Centre in Paris, by Piano + Rogers
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- Public art can enliven the event as demonstrated also in Paris with the spectacular water sculpture park adjacent to the Pompidou Arts Centre.
- A theatre can incorporate electronic external billboards to promote the event to the public. Eg the new Guggenheim proposal New York by Frank Gehry, is a landmark building that incorporates electronic external billboards

FLEXIBILITY

- Flexibility and adaptability is an on-going challenge; it is difficult to achieve in the same performance space
- Theatre consultants, performers, technicians, acousticians, all advise that a multi-purpose theatre to cater perfectly for all types of performance is currently not possible.
- Flexibility and adaptability in theatres is best achieved in a variety of venues, each designed for a specific primary purpose.
- The three halls at the Rome Auditorium, by Renzo Piano, have different capacities and characteristics. Their versatility is inversely proportionate to their size. The smallest with 500 seats is as flexible a space as possible, incorporating movable floors and ceilings with the ability to alter the acoustic properties of the walls. The hall that seats 1200 person hall has a number of flexible elements, including a movable stage and adjustable ceiling. It will be used for chamber music and dance performances. The main hall seats 2700 people. The stage is in an almost central position similar to Hans Scharoun's Philharmonic in Berlin with seats set on plinths at different levels extending right around the orchestra. This arrangement allows the audience to participate completely in the performance. The material factor of physical proximity is reinforced by the feeling of being at one with the performers. In addition, each hall is arranged symmetrically around a central space that forms an open-air amphitheatre.
- Further interesting international examples include: Music space for the opera, 'Prometeo' Milan by Renzo Piano
'Fort Rock': Stadium, Vitrolles France by Rudy Ricciotti Cardiff Opera House proposal: Cardiff Wales by Itsuko Hasegawa
Sidney Myer Music Bowl, Melbourne Australia Gregory Burgess redevelopment of the original by Yuncken Feeman
- However, as our society is developing, there is a blurring of the traditional art disciplines. In addition to live drama and music performance, new theatre design in the future may utilise Holograms (3D), Film, Video, Virtual Reality, Animation and may incorporate dramatic physical stage alterations during a performance. Technology may be able to modify acoustic controls sufficiently in the future to cater for greater adaptability of performance in the same venue (with assessment of the success of the 'flexible' smaller hall at the Rome Auditorium and continued research and development of its flexible components)
- New theatre design will need to consider all these developing art forms and may need to make special provisions in the final design.

TECHNOLOGY:

- Architecture provides space for human habitation.
- Technology should be used to achieve the best space for human occupation.
- Once the relationship of the audience and stage is established, maximising the spatial quality and acoustics of the building are the next major priorities.
- Technology can be integrated into the building fabric to provide performance spaces with: the required technical needs
- design adaptability
- increased comfort for the users
- a heightening of the experience of going to the theatre
- Another different example of the use of technology is the travelling theatre, as seen at the Cirque De Soleil that visited Perth recently. The large tent that houses the travelling Cirque De Soleil, is a complete transportable package from the interlocking paving to the specialist tent lighting.
- The visual expression of technology can blend into a space so that it disappears or be expressed.
- Despite the method of aesthetic expression, it is the proportion and spatial qualities of the interior that is the primary design issue.

CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

- In integrating a theatre into the fabric of the city, the form of the building, its language and its location has the opportunity to make a cultural statement.
- Many cities choose to enrich their culture with a landmark contemporary building. eg, Sydney Opera House, Australia, by Jan Utzon, and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain by Frank Gehry
- A landmark contemporary building presents a cultural attitude, that can gain popular acclaim and international interest. A popular and successful project can stimulate and rejuvenate the surrounding urban fabric as demonstrated by the Pompidou Arts Centre in Paris and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. In addition to adding to the richness of local culture and city life, popular places can stimulate tourism.
- Contemporary design makes a cultural statement of the time and announces the future. In the 1960's, Perth had a modern, progressive and optimistic outlook for the future as demonstrated in the selection of a modern building for housing the Perth City Council as a result of a national design competition.

Since then many pastiches of a historical approach have arisen, due to an apparent lack of faith in the future and a subsequent return to safe, secure and conservative attitudes in society. Recent community attitudes in Perth are changing. Many more contemporary buildings are appearing again and public opinion has ensured the retention of the modern Council House, when it was threatened with demolition.

- International trends in architecture are moving away from historical pastiche; looking forward with optimism and focusing on modern trends in the development of a relevant contemporary architectural approach.
- The most exciting aspect of theatre architecture is that it could be as interesting and experimental in its conceptual form as contemporary theatre.

FORM

- The form and language of a theatre could be practically anything that can be technically built.
- To provide the actual performance space and its visual and sound effects, the theatre is fundamentally a serviced container for performance, either decorated or a simple 'black box'.
- The intended relationship between the performers and the audience determines the auditorium planning, stage type and stage facilities (fly tower)
- The auditorium interior can be 'theatrical' or 'decorated' to provide visual interest or a simple 'black box' depending upon client aspirations, function and budget.
- The foyer, circulation and public areas have the opportunity to provide for special interesting spaces that stimulate and 'wet the appetite' for an exciting performance.
- The relationship of the theatre to its immediate surroundings can be closed and formal or transparent and informal.
- To minimise the mystic of the theatre a transparent and informal welcoming approach could be adopted for the public spaces that relate to the surrounding urban framework
- Public architecture like a theatre has the potential to reflect its regional location.

Global acceptance and desire for new technologies will provide similar technical solutions to common issues, however it is important to maintain and develop cultural and regional influences to provide a sense of place and identity. The Museum of Australia, Canberra by Ashton, Raggart and MacDougall, makes historical reference and reinterprets it in a contemporary form.

CONCLUSION

- What better public building type than a theatre to celebrate human endeavour and expression.
- The type of theatre, its location, its integration into the city and its cultural expression is ultimately a reflection of the aspirations of the client and community.
- Perth is a young modern city with many positive lifestyle attributes; it ought to be optimistic.
- To provide a special addition to any city requires a strong political will, especially necessary to ensure a progressive contemporary approach.
- The client, government and community should approach the project with enthusiasm and optimism about the future.
- The design team need to be empowered by the client to provide a special, state of the art contemporary facility. Storey Hall in Melbourne by Ashton, Raggart and MacDougall is a striking example of public architecture that dramatically adds to the streetscape and enriches the fabric of the city.
- As one might argue that the ultimate public art is architecture, it is important to clearly establish the broad cultural objectives and design direction of a major civic building such as a theatre and allocate the appropriate budget to achieve the objectives and ensure development of our culture.
- If a new theatre is to be built, it should portray a forward thinking and a positive attitude about the future and be located in the City of Perth, to further develop the capital's amenities and attract more people to the inner city.

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Cat Hope

1. Introduction of the theme of my talk:

- This contribution represents my personal ideas though research, consultation and extensive experience.
 - I want to provide little more than food for thought, ideas that allow us to dream - paring down grand ideas is more important than not bringing them up at all!
 - The importance of live performance - its vitality and importance in an ever more impersonal world.
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- The importance of location of Western Australia - a unique offering of desert and sea that should be used and considered in any arts venue plan. It's a special place - allow a venue to reflect that!
 - The low population of WA should be considered, the use of tourism to assist the arts
 - Importance of accessibility of venues to all artists, y independent artists as well as established companies.
 - Audience attending to see the artist, no matter what the venue. Also, the use of many different locations as venue ("inventing" venues) to attract the audience.
 - **What is music in today's world? What will it be tomorrow?**
 - Does music still exist as a pure form? How much should we cater for music from the past?
 - Definitions of music genres - composition, improv and songs - bands and chamber, djs and sound art...can a venue [possibly cater for all this? Should it?
 - Should we cater for commercial music's needs?
 - Sound (as opposed to music) has a part in all performance - this must be considered in any venue.
 - The prevalence of recorded music in our lives - venues should offer possibilities for both pre recorded and live sound
 - **What will music performance be in the future? What are its needs?**
 - The impact of the home PC on sound quality in pre recorded media
 - Digital arts, nano technology and the web - we must cater for them in venues
 - Multi media - film and dance - the new arts are multi medium.
 - The ability of the artist to design an acoustic and a venue that allows this to happen
 - The importance and quality of technicians in music performance and recording is more important than ever, and venues should cater for this.
 - **Considerations for music in a venue**
 - What is the most important consideration for music in a venue? Each genre will have a different need!
 - Acoustics - amplifier or quality enhancer? Do we need to spend as much on acoustic design as in the past?
 - Acoustics for different genres = venues for different genres.
 - Versatility vs purpose made - a versatile venue does not mean an empty box - it means possibilities for equipment within a space
 - Streaming web and thus connectivity are important facilities
 - Accommodating more technicians, and giving access for equipment are considerations
 - **What does an audience need and want in a theatre?**
 - Audience - they like to stand for some music, and sit for others - but they need to be CLOSE. The days of stadia are over.
 - Human scale, intimacy as result of home entertainment boom
 - Sightlines more important than ever before in 'music' venues, as multimedia performance becomes the norm
 - **Placement of venues, heritage and noise considerations**
 - Personality of venue is important. Some venues already have it as a pre-existing function, you may construct a personality in a design, or the artist may construct a personality for their performance only
 - Does heritage mean expensive? A beautiful empty box is a possibility (scaffolding too)
 - Inflexibility of real estate in Perth - incentives for non-purpose buildings could provide a really creative boost for the venue problem without spending a fortune for a new, expensive to hire venue
 - Consider noise restrictions, parking, public transport and disability access
 - The importance of community - why put all the venues in the city? Surely each Town has a community which needs to be services with a versatile arts venue.
 - **Conclusion**
 - We want it all! Planning, not funds, allows us this privilege in the first world.
 - Accessibility for companies and individuals alike.
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- Windows of opportunity to allow creativity to extend to how the venue is used
- Essential to involve artists in venue design and planning, and to provide flexibility for creative use of venues

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Note: Tom Lubin provided a lively and stimulating speech about the relationship of new technology to the arts but did not wish to provide a written paper for this document.

THE INSTITUTE OF INDEPENDENT ARTS CONSULTANTS (WA) Inc.

The IIAC was founded in 2000 by six consultants in Western Australia. In discussing their work informally the group had perceived a need to harmonise procedure and to improve access to a database of operational information. The group felt that in coming together they could better promote the value of consultancy whilst simultaneously improving the way it was delivered. The founding six members formed an executive and have taken two years to carefully put in place the structure of the Institute. The initial membership group works in the field of performing arts but in the more recent past members have been recruited from the field of visual arts and beyond. The Institute was launched at PIAF in 2002 and will shortly announce its website (www.iiac.com.au). These two initiatives were funded by the Department for Culture and the Arts.

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