

THEATRE SPACES AND VENUES AUDIT

ASA 275/09

Arts SA
Government of South Australia

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The brief of the Venues Audit commissioned by Arts SA is to conduct a review of the current and likely future capacity of performing arts spaces and venues in South Australia - with particular focus on those based in the CBD and inner metropolitan areas - and how they meet community requirements.

This audit has found that at present there is a lack of suitable spaces to house international artists during Adelaide Festival and Fringe periods. Equally, there is a lack of suitable and affordable venues in Adelaide for the local theatre community to make and present work.

South Australia was the first Australian city to mount an internationally acclaimed Arts Festival. Now all other Australian states stage their own Arts Festivals. Other states have invested heavily in arts infrastructure over the past decade. Most respondents to this audit believe Adelaide is now suffering from a lack of investment in arts infrastructure and that this has a negative impact on the State's reputation as a cultural leader and preferred destination for arts events.

Unless there is investment in current venues and planning for future venues, it is unlikely that SA will be able to meet the future requirements of local and visiting artists and audiences. This has occasioned a groundswell of concern from the local media, industry professionals, amateur companies and the theatre going public.

Several theatres in the Adelaide CBD face closure or restrictions of use. Other venues in the inner metropolitan area may cease to become available in the near future. Most theatres need an upgrade of equipment and facilities and suffer from a general air of shabbiness. Many theatres have significant safety (OHS&W) and access problems.

Common to all and cited by many performing arts companies are several factors which make South Australia's venues inadequate, outdated, run down and past their prime.

- The lack of rehearsal space.
- Outdated technical equipment.
- Lack of on-going maintenance funds.
- Inadequate disabled access.

At the top of the 'wish list' for the majority of SA arts practitioners and organisations is a new affordable flexible Black Box in a multi-arts hub in the CBD. The 'Black Box' is the term used to describe a fully flexible venue able to be used in multiple configurations by a variety of arts disciplines. This would serve the Festival during peak times and serve as the cutting edge professional curated space for local artists of various art forms at other times. It would be part of the larger vision for the City of

Adelaide and ideally be located on the Riverbank precinct. It would help restore SA as the pre-eminent Festival State.

More immediate solutions involve the upgrading of equipment and facilities in existing venues. With modest to medium scale financial assistance some venues would be capable of serving the arts community and audiences much better.

Finally, better coordination and information sharing in a range of ways can assist with alleviating the problem. As a first step the establishment of a venue body is recommended.

Based on a membership model and with core funding from Arts SA for a small staff, it would:

- Foster collaboration between venues and artists.
- Convene the interdepartmental and stakeholder steering groups.
- Assist with co-ordination and information sharing.
- Coordinate the training and mentoring opportunities for venue managers.
- Oversee a venue and equipment register.
- Monitor the state of SA's venues.
- Advocate for the retention, maintenance and planning for appropriate venues.

The level of interest in response to this audit has demonstrated the commitment of the local arts community to work in a constructive way to help address the shortage of performance venues in South Australia.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: COORDINATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

While it is acknowledged that the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association (APACA) is the national peak body representing and supporting performing arts centres and is the lobbying and advocacy body for these venues, it is recommended that an umbrella organisation (with the working title 'VENUE SA') be established for local venues.

Based on a membership model and with core funding from Arts SA for a small staff this would:

- Foster collaboration between venues and artists.
- Convene the interdepartmental and stakeholder steering groups.
- Assist with co-ordination and information sharing.
- Coordinate the training and mentoring opportunities for venue managers.
- Oversee a venue and equipment register.
- Monitor the state of SA's venues.
- Advocate for the retention, maintenance and planning for appropriate venues.

VENUE SA would:

- Through Arts SA, convene a **'future venue' stakeholder steering group** to meet regularly to assess needs, to communicate changes to existing arts venues and to co-ordinate planning for new performance venues. The interdepartmental government and stakeholder steering group would draw membership from representatives of Arts SA, Tourism, Heritage, DECS (The Department of Education and Children's Services), DFEEST (Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology), DTEI (Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure), the Office for Recreation & Sport, the Universities and local government (the Adelaide City Council).
- Through Arts SA, work with DTEI, DECS, the Independent Schools Association and the Catholic Schools Association to coordinate:
 - A register of current **performing arts venues in schools**.
 - A register of planned performing arts buildings and gym conversions in schools.
 - Likely availability of these venues to the broader community.

- Develop a checklist for schools to use when they are planning and building their own performance venues (taking advice from experts such as Steve Grieve and Geoff Cobham).
- Through Arts SA, commission a consultant with appropriate experience (suggest Christie Anthoney), a representative from the Adelaide City Council and a legal expert to work with all the different jurisdictions - the Liquor Licensing Tribunal, Adelaide City Council, Police, Metropolitan Fire Service and insurance experts to develop a **Temporary Theatre Licensing Act** that incorporates all the different legal requirements for the establishment of temporary venues.
- Oversee and support the setting up of an on-line **venue register** that details availability of rehearsal space for short term hire. (Please refer to Section 8 – **Renew Adelaide**).
- Oversee the setting up of an on-line venue register that details technical equipment for sale or hire.
- Investigate the possibility of establishing and managing an **equipment bank** which is stored in an inexpensive outer metropolitan location at non peak times.
- Co ordinate the **training and mentoring opportunities** for venue managers.

RECOMMENDATION 2: THE ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE TO HOLD AN OPEN DAY FOR THE LOCAL ARTS COMMUNITY

This would be to show the capabilities and the significance of their new 'Black Box' Theatre at the Entertainment Centre soon after it is completed. A branding exercise should be undertaken to promote the theatre as a multi-purpose 'high arts' venue.

RECOMMENDATION 3: INVESTMENT IN EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Allocation of funds to overhaul the equipment at the **AFC** and bring it up to current industry standards in order to make the AFC competitive with its interstate counterparts.
- Further allocation of funds as a percentage of the annual **AFC** budget to be earmarked for on-going maintenance of technical equipment.
- Make the **Space Theatre** a venue that can attract **rental subsidy** in a rental subsidy scheme for local independent companies.
- Provide funding to fit out the **Bakehouse Theatre** with air conditioning and flexible seating.
- Make the **Bakehouse Theatre** a space that can attract rental subsidy in a **rental subsidy** scheme.

- Provide funding to fit out the **Queen's Theatre** with a full lighting rig, flexible seating and sound equipment and dressing rooms. Re-examine the hiring charges further to make the Theatre fully workable for local independent companies. This could be done during the enforced closure of the space during the construction of the affordable housing development next door.
- Make the **Queen's Theatre** a space that can attract **rental subsidy** in a rental subsidy scheme.
- Arts SA consult with the Production Manager of the Adelaide Festival to investigate if fitting out the Queen's Theatre will alleviate the venue shortage during future Festivals.
- Provide funding for **Higher Ground** to employ a FOH Manager at peak times and improve front of house facilities. Investigate provision of further funding for Higher Ground to improve air conditioning and technical equipment.
- Make **Higher Ground** a space that can attract **rental subsidy** in a rental subsidy scheme.
- In the short term - until 2012 - make **Holden Street Theatre** a space that can attract rental subsidy in a **rental subsidy** scheme.

RECOMMENDATION 4 : ARTS SA TO ESTABLISH A MAINTENANCE FUND

- Arts SA to establish a 'maintenance fund' so that venues can apply for routine and on-going maintenance funds. This could be a competitive grant pool with successful venues attracting one-off maintenance grants or it could be on-going funding available to registered or selected venues granted on a % of revenue or usage basis.

RECOMMENDATION 5: ARTS SA TO WORK WITH THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY AND CLIENT SERVICES TO CREATE A FUNDING POOL FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN DISABILITY ACCESS

- Arts SA to work with the Office of Disability and Client Services to create a funding pool for improvements in disability access in venues. Any refurbishments of existing venues and planning for new venues should factor in the Principles of 'Universal Design' at the planning stage.

RECOMMENDATION 6: NEW SPACES – THE ‘WISH LIST’

There should be consideration and planning for a new model of an affordable, flexible, multi use, curated and subsidised hub incorporating new performance spaces, cafes and art gallery etc. The hub could include spaces for music (a 400-seat recital hall and possibly a concert hall), a small-sized 250-seat Black Box and a medium-sized 600-seat Black Box for drama.

The new hub should demonstrate best practice for disability access. It should have a strong curatorial vision. It should have great flexibility in its staffing structure and operate with a very lean permanent staff.

It should take into consideration the need for a strong CBD geographical focus which links the existing cultural boulevard of the AFC, Museum, Art Gallery and Library around either:

- The Adelaide Convention Centre, down to Light Square and embracing the Higher Ground, the Queen’s Theatre, ACArts and the Lion Arts Centre or,
- The current RAH site.

RECOMMENDATION 7 NEW OR REFURBISHED VENUES CONSIDER THE NEED FOR A CURATED SPACE

That any consideration of a new venue (a ‘Black Box’ in the CBD) or a refurbished venue (such as the Bakehouse or the Queen’s Theatre) takes into consideration the need for a curated space that strongly identifies with the production of new professional work. That discussions be undertaken with the Bakehouse and the History Trust on behalf of the Queen’s to ascertain whether either of these venues could – with funding assistance - fulfil this need.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PARAMETERS OF THE THEATRE SPACES AND VENUES AUDIT

The brief of the Venues Audit commissioned by Arts SA is to conduct a review of the current and likely future capacity of performing arts spaces and venues in South Australia - with particular focus on those based in the CBD and inner metropolitan areas - and how they meet community requirements.

Please refer to Appendix A - The Project Brief.

From 16 November to 19 December 2009 all the performing arts organisations listed in the 2009/10 Arts SA Arts Directory were contacted and invited to be interviewed or to provide feedback in a survey.

A number of selected schools from the State, Catholic and Independent sectors were also invited to take part in a survey about their facilities and their needs.

61% of arts organisations and 22% of schools responded (102 responses in total). Their feedback informs the basis of this report and its recommendations. It provides a snapshot of the status of venues in SA at a time when there is growing concern in the arts sector about the lack of affordable and suitable venues for the range of activities.

Please refer to Appendix B - Arts Organisations and Schools Invited to take Part in the Audit and List of Respondents.

Please refer to Appendix C – List of Survey Questions for Arts Organisations and Schools.

1.2 BACKGROUND - SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S REPUTATION AS A CULTURAL LEADER

SA has a deserved reputation as cultural leader. This is based on:

- The historical pre-eminence of the biennial Adelaide Festival of Arts as Australia's first and finest arts Festival. Established in 1960, the Adelaide Festival has a strong tradition of offering high quality, diverse and innovative performances from around Australia and the world.
- The reputation of the Adelaide Fringe as the largest and most significant Fringe Festival in the Southern hemisphere. The Fringe was also established in 1960 as an open access event to showcase local, national and international small-scale and independent artists. The Fringe became an annual event in 2007.

- The level of performing arts activity in Adelaide, which offers a rich diet of performances. Per capita this matches and often surpasses the performing arts activity offered interstate.
- The strength of South Australia's local companies. These include South Australia's two dance companies of national significance (Australian Dance Theatre and Leigh Warren & Dancers), a national performance company for young people (Windmill) and a niche opera company (State Opera of South Australia). Theatre companies range from mainstream (State Theatre of South Australia) to numerous innovative independent companies such as Brink, Flying Penguin Productions, Floogle and Slingsby. Restless Dance Company and Tutti Ensemble cater for people with disabilities.
- Specialist performance events of national significance include the renowned productions of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* in 1998 and 2004, mounted by State Opera of South Australia.
- The Adelaide Symphony Orchestra has been operational for over 50 years and it won international critical acclaim for the *Ring Cycle* in 1998 and 2004.
- WOMADelaide
- Other significant music companies with a national reputation include the Australian String Quartet and the Adelaide Chamber Singers.
- The Come Out Festival, which is Australia's largest festival for young people and other youth arts activities through the South Australian Youth Arts Board and Carclew.
- The annual Adelaide Cabaret Festival, with sell-out performances at the Adelaide Festival Centre.
- The Festival of Ideas and subsequent flow on developments, eg: Thinkers in Residence.
- SA has a reputation as the cradle for many talented arts workers who have taken positions as artists and cultural leaders in Australia and beyond.

1.2.1 WHAT MAKES SOUTH AUSTRALIA A GOOD 'FESTIVAL STATE'?

Adelaide's size and climate make the city ideally suited to mounting festivals such as the Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts (Adelaide Festival), the Adelaide Fringe Festival (the Fringe), Writer's Week, Feast Festival and Come Out. The compact nature of the city makes walking between venues a manageable option. For much of the year, the climate encourages arts activities along with alfresco dining and large-scale free outdoor performances. During major Festivals the 'festival spirit' pervades the whole city in a way that is not possible in the larger cities of Melbourne and Sydney.

David Williams, a recent consultant to the SA Tourism Commission, identified wine and culture as the significant points of difference for SA that give this State a market advantage in attracting tourists. There is a spike in economic activity in the State during significant festivals and cultural events. Economic impact studies demonstrate that the Adelaide Festival and the *Ring Cycle* have increased visitors to the State.

<https://www.adelaidefringe.com.au/Corporate-partners/Fringe-Audience.aspx>

<http://www.adelaidefestival.com.au/servlet/Web?s=2290869&action=changePage&pageID=792949593>

1.2.2 THE CURRENT STATE OF VENUES IN ADELAIDE

Performing arts activities are underpinned by suitable rehearsal and performance venues. The selection of an appropriate venue has a huge impact in the success of a show in practical, financial and artistic terms.

Quality venues attract artists of calibre. At present there is a perceived lack of suitable spaces to house international artists during Adelaide Festival and Fringe periods. Equally there is a perceived lack of suitable and affordable venues in Adelaide for the local theatre community to make and present work.

This audit is undertaken at a time when several theatres in the Adelaide CBD area face closure or restrictions of use (notably the Union Hall). Other venues in the inner metropolitan area - the Star Theatres (formerly Theatre 62) and Holden Street theatres - may cease to become available in the near future. Most theatres need an upgrade of equipment and facilities and suffer from a general air of shabbiness. Many theatres have significant OHS&W and disabled access problems.

This has occasioned a groundswell of concern from the local media, industry professionals, amateur companies and the theatre going public.

The 'Save our Festival State' movement has a Facebook page with over 1,700 members who have joined since October 2009. This movement is lamenting the loss of performing arts venues.

With so many theatres having been closed and the imminent demolition of Union Hall, possibly limited or no access to the Scott Theatre and restricted access to the Odeon Theatre - the availability of performance space in Adelaide is at crisis level.

What to do when there are no longer any theatres for community groups to buy and return to their former glory.

Surely the arts are as valuable to this State as our great sporting heroes and scientists. If so, where is the infrastructure for the masses?

<http://www.facebook.com/saveourfestivalstate>

The arts blog 'Confidential without the Parenthesis' <http://cwtp.wordpress.com> also addresses the issue of diminishing venues with a number of on-line articles.

Since late September there has been a groundswell of hue and cry around this fair city of Adelaide in the diminishing amount of theatre spaces and venues to hold the types of shows that festivals attract or can contain multi-media / multi-art form works or just hold our fine G & S Soc's.

Paul Grabowsky the Boss started it all by bagging our theatres saying "The (venues) in existence have started to be not always appropriate for the sort of work that's being made."

Adelaide Advertiser September 27th, 2009.

<http://cwtp.wordpress.com>

Other currently active informal advocacy groups are the lobby group 'Save the Union Hall' (from demolition) and the Renew Adelaide movement which - based on the Renew Newcastle movement - aims to make vacant buildings in the CBD available to artists.

1.2.3 HOW DOES SA RATE COMPARED WITH INTERSTATE AND INTERNATIONAL COUNTERPARTS?

Although South Australia was the first Australian city to mount an internationally acclaimed Arts Festival, all other Australian states now stage their own Arts Festivals.

In The Australian 12 – 13 December 2009, Rosemary Neill examined how in cultural terms, other state capitals are outshining Sydney. Significantly she makes no mention of Adelaide.

Certainly, in terms of public architecture, new arts venues and blockbuster exhibitions and musicals, Sydney is fast being eclipsed by Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne in Brisbane and Melbourne, state governments have invested hugely and effectively in arts infrastructure and building in a way Sydney hasn't.

Rosemary Neill, The Australian 12-13 December 2009

Most respondents to this audit believe Adelaide is suffering from the same lack of investment in arts infrastructure and that this has a negative impact on the State's reputation as a cultural leader.

2. EXISTING VENUES

The following list/summary of venues in South Australia is based on responses received for this audit in the period November – January 2009.

2.1 EXISTING VENUES IN THE ADELAIDE CBD

2.1.1 THE ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE TRUST (AFCT) THEATRES

<http://www.adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au>

The Adelaide Festival Centre (AFC) opened in 1973, the same year as the Sydney Opera House. The complex is showing its age despite an upgrade of Festival Drive, Festival Theatre front of house facilities in 2003 and Dunstan Playhouse front of house facilities in 2009.

Three years ago the AFC had 'dark' nights 40% of the time but now the complex operates at 83% capacity. This additional activity has been welcomed by the Adelaide theatre going public but it has highlighted the current deficiencies of the AFC venues.

Karen Bryant, Associate Director reports that all spaces have problems:

- No money has been spent on maintenance to bring the outdated technical equipment up to current industry standards. As a consequence most artists bring in their own equipment, even standard lighting rigs and radio microphones. This has compromised some external hires and it has added significantly to the costs of hiring the venue. The potentially dangerous state of the equipment and frequent breakages has resulted in 'reputational damage'.
- The AFC building has serious structural problems (leaks).
- There is a lack of rehearsal space within the complex.
- Some further funds are needed to meet amended legislation for disability access.

RECOMMENDATION:

Allocation of funds to overhaul the equipment at the AFC and bring it up to current industry standards in order to make the AFC competitive with its interstate counterparts.

Further allocation of funds as a percentage of the annual AFC budget to be earmarked for on-going maintenance of technical equipment.

THE FESTIVAL THEATRE

<http://www.adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au/afc/festival-theatre.php>

Despite the problems outlined above, the Festival Theatre is fully booked and it remains the first option for major touring companies and State Opera of SA.

The Adelaide Festival Theatre is the best lyric theatre in the country particularly for large-scale operatic repertory. It has the best stage and orchestra pit, back stage facilities and auditorium sightlines.

Steve Phillips, State Opera of SA

It is also used by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. The LARIS sound system - which was installed before the *Ring Cycle* and proved very satisfactory for opera - needs 'tweaking' and for this and other acoustic reasons musicians feel that the venue is unsuitable as a concert hall.

Musicians feel that the Festival Theatre is a compromised space and top-flight international artists ask about the venue before they commit to coming to Adelaide.

Rainer Jozeps ASO

DUNSTAN PLAYHOUSE AND THE SPACE THEATRE

<http://www.adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au/afc/pages/venues/dunstan-playhouse.php>

<http://www.adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au/afc/pages/venues/space-theatre.php>

These theatres are generally considered to be good for drama and dance. They have an intimate feel and are in good working order (outdated technical equipment aside). There is unutilised capacity in these theatres, particularly in the Space. The AFC offers the Space to small companies at a heavy discount.

The AFC is too expensive for local companies. A major problem with the AFC venues of the Festival Theatre, Playhouse and Space is lack of affordability. Even if rental is reduced or waived in the Space, most local companies cannot afford the staffing costs at the AFC. The venue must comply with the MEAA award and it is not possible for companies to bring in their own technicians and front of house staff. The Space Theatre - which has the potential to be the best 'Black Box' in Adelaide for innovative work - does not get used in any but the 'corner' configuration (where seating is in an L Shape) for many local productions because the turn-around costs are prohibitive.

Many survey respondents believe that the AFC staffing policies make their venues 'unsustainable' in the long term. The Space Theatre would be used by many more local groups if it were affordable.

RECOMMENDATION:

Make the Space Theatre a venue that can attract rental subsidy in a rental subsidy scheme for local independent companies.

Some survey respondents cited the need for an 'attitudinal shift' at the AFC which could help with making the theatres more affordable – more enabling and flexible technicians, better marketing and ticketing services and more flexibility with catering.

- *The charges at the AFC are outrageous and not sustainable in the longer term.*
- *Casuals could do it for half the price.*
- *The venues are overly unionised.*
- *The loss of the 'jack of all trades' technician comes at a cost.*
- *They see themselves as custodians of the venue whereas they should be spaces for hire.*
- *There is not enough marketing support from venue managers to raise the profile of the hirer – it is difficult to compete with strong marketing competition from venue management promoting their own product.*
- *Compulsory ticketing system is not up to industry standard.*

Comments from various survey respondents about the AFC Venues.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE

<http://www.adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au/afc/pages/venues/her-majestys-theatre.php>

The 'Maj' will be 100 years old in 2013. It is managed by the AFCT. It is in a great central location but it is currently under utilised except in Adelaide Festival periods. It suffers from a cramped foyer, bad sightlines, uncomfortable seating, inadequate seat row spacing, inadequate disability access, bad dressing room facilities, buzzing in the sound system and the orchestra pit is too small.

Some of these problems are a product of its age and are not easily fixable. Realigning the seating to improve sightlines and fixing the sound system would be affordable ways to tackle

some problems in the first instance. One respondent suggested that imaginative partnerships (perhaps with surrounding enterprises like the Metropolitan Hotel, La Boehme and the Promethean) would be a way to re-energise the Maj.

Its potential as a hub for children's theatre (a home for Windmill?) has been investigated in the past and merits consideration again.

2.1.2 THE BAKEHOUSE THEATRE

www.bakehousetheatre.com

The Bakehouse Theatre is in high demand due to its inner city location, its welcoming atmosphere and its reputation. It is well run and affordable, with its own website based marketing and ticketing service and all technical equipment and power etc inclusive in the hire costs.

The theatre aims to cater for the 'second tier' professional theatre industry and it is home to two professional resident companies *Accidental Productions* and *five.point.one* and one amateur company *Unseen Theatre Company*.

In practical terms, the venue would benefit from air conditioning; more comfortable seating that can be moved into different configurations, three phase power in the studio, technical equipment upgrade and a more sophisticated marketing plan.

In branding terms the venue may be able to take the niche of a small professionally curated venue in Adelaide to house the production of new cutting edge professional work. (Referred to in section 5 of this report). This would need consultation with the appropriate companies, additional administrative, marketing and programming assistance and resources to make the spaces more flexible.

I believe that the focus on any audit/review of performing arts venues should be on improving the venues that have shown that they can function professionally all year round, before proceeding to create new ones which will most likely remain dormant outside the Festival period.

While the Bakehouse is well used all year round, with the improvements suggested above, it can accommodate more emerging artists during the year and more shows during the Festival period than it can currently afford to do. I suggest that these improvements will come at a far lower cost to the community than creating new theatre spaces.

Pamela Munt, Bakehouse Theatre

The Bakehouse is a theatre rich in history and renowned for supporting independent companies and artists in Adelaide.

When one compares theatres of similar size in Melbourne and Sydney, Adelaide's small independent theatres look tired and unwelcoming for audiences. For the artists, their 'place of work' is hardly welcoming either.

The government should be looking to invest in professional theatre at ALL levels and a key part of that is the venues we perform in. The government has a golden opportunity to take a theatre, like The Bakehouse and lift it to a higher standard of facility. One that audience and artists can take pride in. One that companies of a similar size from interstate will be keen to use when they bring their work here (especially during our peak festive season). And one that reflects the VALUE the government places on independent artists in this state.

Corey McMahon five.point.one

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide funding to fit out the Bakehouse Theatre with air conditioning and flexible seating. Make the Bakehouse Theatre a space that can attract rental subsidy in a rental subsidy scheme.

2.1.3 THE QUEEN'S THEATRE

<http://www.history.sa.gov.au/Queens/Queens.htm>

The Queen's Theatre has been described as a 'fantastic haunted space - a faded ruin'. It is the oldest theatre on mainland Australia and is a well-regarded venue due to its central city location, its ambience and its potential as a flexible performance space. It is managed by the History Trust. It has held selected successful performances in the past, but it is underutilised as a performance venue.

Its main disadvantage is that it has no infrastructure and all respondents who mentioned the Queen's cited the costs of bringing in complete lighting stock, technical equipment and flexible seating as making the venue cost prohibitive.

Later in this report it is suggested that the Queen's and surrounds are one of the options for a permanent 'affordable workable, flexible 'Black Box' in the CBD' if they could be bought up to a suitable standard. The Queen's Theatre sits next door to a site that will undergo a major affordable housing development in the next 2 years. This would present an opportunity for the Queen's Theatre to undergo a refurbishment.

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide funding to fit out the Queen's Theatre with a full lighting rig, flexible seating and sound equipment and re-examine the hiring charges further to make the Theatre fully workable for local independent companies.

Make the Queen's Theatre a space that can attract rental subsidy in a rental subsidy scheme.

2.1.4 THE ADELAIDE TOWN HALL

http://www.cityofadelaide.com.au/scripts/nc.dll?ADCCBRAND:STANDARD::pc=PC_04_04

The Adelaide Town Hall is the preferred venue for selected Chamber music groups and it is renowned for its fine acoustic for smaller orchestras.

It is not considered a suitable permanent venue for a full Symphony Orchestra by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra due to its less than optimal size.

It operates as a venue for hire and while the management gives first pick to regular users (Musica Viva and Australian Chamber Orchestra), music groups have to schedule well in advance to work around wedding bookings.

2.1.5 THE GRAINGER STUDIO

http://www.aso.com.au/about_the_venue.htm

The Grainger Studio in Hindley Street is the rehearsal venue and the home of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. The ASO holds daytime concerts there and it is used by Seraphim Trio and other small groups on an occasional basis. It has no street presence and to be seriously considered as a proper venue, it would need a makeover (the audience currently enters the venue through a cafe). It must also contend with the seedy elements of Hindley Street if used at night.

2.1.6 THE ARTS THEATRE

The Arts Theatre in Angas Street is the performance venue for a number of amateur theatre groups. It is fully booked and it attracts loyal audiences. The manager believes in serving this audience base and programs 'old favourites' in order to keep filling the theatre and to stay viable. The Arts Theatre is a good example of a well-run venue with a following and the current manager is proactive in maintaining its recognised brand. Given the manager's strong and solo involvement in the Arts Theatre programming and her intention to retire soon, succession planning is an issue to consider for this venue in the near future.

The Adelaide Festival and Fringe use the space in peak periods; this is the only time that professional companies use the venue.

RECOMMENDATION:

Use the Venue Manager at the Arts Theatre as a resource to mentor other theatre managers.

2.1.7 THE ROYALTY THEATRE

The Royalty Theatre is owned by the Callisthenics Association and that is the chief focus of the venue. It is available for hire during peak times but suffers from a small stage with a problematic rake, sightline problems and a small foyer. In order to be considered as a viable alternative venue for local professional companies, it would need a make-over and more 'theatre orientated' management.

2.1.8 HIGHER GROUND

<http://www.higherground.org.au/>

Higher Ground is an independent not-for-profit multi-arts centre. It has an open access policy and the social inclusion agenda has been a key driver in programming decisions. Its brand is as an affordable and approachable venue for third tier emerging artists. Higher Ground rightly prides itself on its 'can do' attitude.

It is popular as a Fringe venue and receives many approaches from Fringe artists. Higher Ground will manage two additional new venues for the next Fringe – an outdoor space and a studio space in the ACArts building next door.

Higher Ground has aspirations to using its multi-arts platform as a vehicle for more adventurous programming and for cross art form activities to occur. The manager also aspires to a program of more first and second tier companies - but he acknowledges that the open access agenda hurts this professional image. He sees the Fringe as an opportunity to rebrand with quality shows. He also believes that some of the debate about the amateur/professional divide hurts the sector.

It is not a viable conversation. some companies have elitist attitudes about exclusivity..... 'Amateur' and 'professional' does not mean that they cannot rub shoulders and some of the most ground breaking work can happen that way.... let me rebrand what we do by going outside of the state for our programming decisions.

Dush Kumar, Higher Ground

Higher Ground has security of tenure for 20 (4 x 5) years so they can plan for the long-term vision. They would like to see a combination of art forms and emerging artists through to established companies using the space in conjunction with Festivals and special projects. A similar model exists in the UK at 'Out of the Blue'. <http://2outoftheblue.org.uk/index.htm>

Higher Ground acknowledges shortcomings with the space; the air-conditioning doesn't work, the ceilings are too low, equipment needs upgrading and there is an incompatible tenant next door (a band venue).

Some users of Higher Ground have found that the theatre space and the front of house areas are not maintained adequately and this impacts on the comfort of the audience. They say the management appears to concentrate on bar takings as the main profit centre for the venue. It has been suggested that it would be better for Higher Ground to charge more for venue hire and make the theatre more part of the core business.

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide funding for Higher Ground to employ a FOH Manager at peak times and improve front of house facilities. Investigate provision of further funding for Higher Ground to improve air conditioning and technical equipment.

Make Higher Ground a space that can attract rental subsidy in a rental subsidy scheme.

2.1.9 THE UNION HALL

The Union Hall on the University of Adelaide campus is slated for demolition because the University wishes to redevelop the site for lecture theatres. The University cites access and OHS&W issues with the hall and the pressing need for more lecture theatre spaces on their land locked campus as the reasons for contemplating the demolition of the building.

The potential future of this venue sits outside the scope of this audit because the building is owned and managed by the University of Adelaide. However, it is currently a most contentious issue and it has acted as one of the catalysts for this current examination of all venues in Adelaide.

The Union Hall, which opened in 1958 and was converted into a lecture facility in 2007, has played a significant part in the arts history of South Australia.

This audit has received a number of submissions about the Union Hall. Arguments for retaining the building are its heritage value as a fine example of modernist architecture, its rich history - Patrick White's *Ham Funeral* was given its world premiere there - and its potential to keep being used as a working theatre in a city that suffers from a lack of performance spaces.

The main objections to its impending closure come from the amateur and non-professional sectors of the arts community. Some community groups - particularly dance schools - feel that its closure would mean that they have reduced options for performance venues. The Hall has not been available for the last couple of years for outside hire. Professional companies and the Adelaide Festival and the Fringe do not consider it a suitable venue.

The decision as to whether the demolition goes ahead rests, at the time of writing, with the Heritage Register. At its meeting on 4 December 2009 the Heritage Council accepted a recommendation from its Register Committee for deferral on any decision to provisionally list Union Hall pending further input from the University and nominators. The next scheduled meeting of the Heritage Council is on 29 January 2010. At its meeting on 14 December 2009 the Adelaide City Council also recommended that the SA Heritage Council protect the Union Hall by adding it to the State Register of Heritage Places.

2.1.10 THE SCOTT THEATRE

http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ps/services/scott_theatre.html

The Scott Theatre, on the campus of the University of Adelaide, will remain a working theatre, but only at times when it is not needed by the University as a lecture space. This hampers the potential to use the theatre as a professional performance venue. The Adelaide Festival uses the space because the alternatives are so limited, however they acknowledge significant shortcomings with the venue. The chief problem is the restricted hours of access because the Festival clashes with a time of peak usage for the University during orientation periods.

A theatre is not really a theatre without exclusive access and we can only program known shows at the Scott.

Kate Gould, Adelaide Festival

The venue is currently deemed to be unsafe by the Production Manager of the Adelaide Festival; it has limited backstage passages (which are part of the teaching facilities of the university and therefore not secure), a cramped loading dock opening onto a roadway and a hemp fly-line.

2.1.11 ELDER HALL

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/elderhall>

The Elder Hall on the campus of the University of Adelaide is the main performance venue for the Elder Conservatorium and it adequately houses a variety of other music groups. The new manager has attracted more external users and she has a good understanding of the needs of professional musicians.

2.1.12 ACARTS - MAIN THEATRE AND THE ACARTS X-SPACE

<http://www.acarts.edu.au>

The two theatres housed in the TAFE Adelaide College of the Arts building in Light Square were built in 2000.

The main theatre – a 220-seat space - is hampered by a very steep (almost unworkable) rake in the auditorium. This is a difficult problem to rectify. The space has been used successfully for children’s performances during Come Out Festivals and the recent ASSITEJ conference, but it is generally underutilised by external hirers.

ACArts X-space is a very workable space and external hirers would love better access to the venue.

Many survey respondents have cited “another accessible, affordable, flexible ‘Black Box’ in the CBD - like the X space at ACArts” as the first priority on their wish list for a future venue.

The ACArts theatres are well equipped and supported by good backstage facilities. In the past, TAFE management has taken the view that external hirers must work around scheduled classes. The theatres have only been available in term breaks and after hours.

It is worth noting that as an educational institution our priority is the students’ learning outcomes. As such, preference may be given to external hirers who are able to demonstrate a preparedness to integrate their activities with our students’ learning processes.

Ian Grant, ACArts

The Robyn Archer Review of ACArts operations has highlighted the need for arts students to have 24 hour access to the building, more integration with professional companies and more activity generally in the complex in order to enliven the environment and to replicate professional conditions. Christie Anthony’s recently announced appointment as the new Artistic Director of ACArts commencing in 2010, and the establishment of the new reference group recommended (and chaired) by Robyn Archer, will help to bring about a change in the culture of ACArts. Hopefully this will assist TAFE to free up the access to the venues within the building for the benefit of current students, graduates and professional arts workers.

2.1.13 TEMPORARY VENUES, CHURCHES, NIGHTCLUBS

CHURCHES

Music Groups such as the Adelaide Chamber Singers use churches like St John’s, Pilgrim Church, and St Peters Cathedral as venues for their classical music performances (refer to section 4.6.).

TEMPORARY VENUES AND NIGHTCLUBS

The Adelaide Fringe is the main driver in transforming temporary spaces into performance venues, mostly within the CBD in a 'Hub' where the majority of artists want to perform. The Fringe has moved away from using and managing traditional medium sized venues (and this is perhaps because there is very little available in that category in Adelaide).

The Fringe has suggested various strategies to improve the process of transforming temporary venues. (Refer to section 4.3.2.)

2.1.14 AUSDANCE

Ausdance provides a good affordable service to small independents to rehearse and perform at its studio.

2.2 EXISTING VENUES IN THE INNER METROPOLITAN AREA

2.2.1 HOLDEN STREET THEATRES

<http://www.holdenstreettheatres.com/about/faq.php>

Holden Street Theatres, in Hindmarsh, consists of a venue for hire, a production house that works with local, national and international companies and a home to the Holden Street Theatre Company Inc. The theatres are well managed. The venues are well regarded by the theatre community and are in high demand during the Fringe. There is unused capacity at Holden Street.

Holden Street theatres suffer from:

- Location - considered by all but dedicated audiences to be too far away from the CBD hub.
- Competition with inner city venues which is especially marked during the Feast and the Cabaret Festival.
- Proximity to the soccer stadium next door – during soccer matches one theatre is inoperable due to noise.
- Inadequate disability access.
- Outdated equipment.

The Holden Street Theatres provide a good working model of a well-managed facility that serves local companies. Martha Lott's submission details Holden Street's initiatives with the Edinburgh Fringe and her aspirations for increasing theatre usage and activity for year round local companies.

The best way for venues to be filled with the current climate in the arts is for them to be free to hirers. If companies could afford to produce then I feel there would be more risks taken by them. Even if not all the time but for an applied number per year, per venue – outside of Fringe then there would be the opportunity to have the venue used. This would generate exposure, income and hopefully repeat usage by those companies that were successful.

Martha Lott, Holden Street Theatres

RECOMMENDATION:

In the short term -until 2012 - make Holden Street Theatres a space that can attract rental subsidy in a rental subsidy scheme.

2.2.2 STAR THEATRES

The Star Theatres (formerly Theatre 62), in Hilton are managed by Mighty Good Productions. The theatres will be decommissioned in 2011 when the Council intends to sell the venue and the RSL hall next door. The venues are not utilised to their full capacity because they are considered too far from the CBD hub. Mighty Good Productions are planning for an alternative nearby space to continue their operations as a school and production house, which they intend to fund from their own resources.

2.2.3 THE ODEON THEATRE

The Odeon Theatre in Norwood is used by many youth and school groups. It has a 10-year lease that runs out in 2016 with a one-year termination clause if the owner wants to redevelop the site. The venue is funded through DECS. These two factors make security of tenure a risk. To reduce this risk, the venue will undergo a change of management in 2010 with Patch Theatre Company taking it over as their performance and rehearsal space. Patch intends to keep the venue available for hire to school and youth groups - they will need to do this as an income generator. Patch will hire the space to long-term users (schools and festivals), use it for their own productions and if there are any available slots, it will then become available for commercial hirers.

The former manager of the theatre taught generations of young theatre workers in basic theatre crafts. His departure (as of December 2009) will leave a gap in this technical and theatre craft training and basic theatre maintenance training which will need to be addressed; either by the Patch Production Manager or through the TAFE Technical Production course at ACArts.

2.2.4 THE FORGE AT MARRAYATVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

<http://www.marryatvillehs.sa.edu.au/forge>

The 338-seat Forge Theatre at Marrayatville High School is used by professional groups. It is a flexible space and fully operational. The school is very enabling and recognises the value to their students in rubbing shoulders with professional artists.

2.2.5 THE OPERA STUDIO

<http://www.saopera.sa.gov.au/site/operastudio>

The Opera Studio is located at Netley. It is used as the home base and rehearsal venue for State Opera of SA (SOSA). SOSA makes the venue available for small performance groups and for community use as an affordable performance space. They also run their Opera Studio seasons in the venue.

2.2.6 THEBARTON THEATRE

www.thebartontheatre.com.au

The Thebarton Theatre is a commercially operated 2000-seat contemporary music theatre venue. It is used about 50% of the time. It is a heritage building owned by the West Torrens Council and the Managing Company, Weslo Holdings has a 20-year lease. It is fully operational. Weslo Holdings have expressed concern that the new Entertainment Centre theatre will operate in direct competition to the Thebarton Theatre.

2.2.7 VARIOUS OTHER SCHOOL THEATRES

The timing of this audit made the collection of data from schools difficult.

Some schools (such as Westminster at Marion) have good quality venues.

Other schools are in the planning stages for building halls and new performance spaces. Some of these constructions are in response to the Federal Economic Stimulus funds and are being done to a tight timeline. However, it would be valuable for schools to coordinate with theatre venue architects and production experts before they build their spaces so that simple and cheap infrastructure such as three phase power, lighting rigging points and loading doorways can be built into the original specifications to make their venues more usable for their own productions and for outside hirers. This would also avoid costly mistakes that have been known to happen through lack of appropriate advice at the construction stage.

RECOMMENDATION:

Arts SA to work with the DTEI, DECS, the Independent Schools Association and the Catholic Schools Association to coordinate:

- **A register of current performing arts venues in schools.**
- **A register of planned performing arts buildings and gym conversions in schools.**
- **Likely availability of these venues to the broader community.**
- **Develop a checklist for schools to use when they are planning and building their own performance venues (taking advice from experts such as Steve Grieve and Geoff Cobham).**

2.3 EXISTING VENUES IN THE OUTER METROPOLITAN AREA

Venues in the outer suburbs report that they are underutilised. Performing companies report that they prefer to use rehearsal and performance venues as close to the city as possible.

2.3.1 VITALSTATISTIX AT PORT ADELAIDE

<http://www.vitalstatistix.com.au/venue.html>

The Waterside Worker's Hall at Port Adelaide is used by Vitalstatistix (Vitals) as their home base. The venue has local historical significance and the Waterside Worker's Hall Focus Group is actively campaigning to retain the history, community use and creative hub of the venue and to ensure the future of the building by addressing the maintenance issues. This needs to be addressed through DFEEST, who are responsible for the management of the building.

The Hall has been used by various groups including Floogle, Slingsby, Restless, Patch, Ladykillers, Real Time Collaborators and Kururru for development of new work. Vitals welcome external theatre users and they attempt to be very flexible and work with hirers to accommodate their budgets while ensuring that the venue does not cause a financial burden. They would like additional resources to enable them to continue to offer the Hall on this basis.

However, they suffer from the disadvantage of their location because most groups state that their preference is to rehearse and perform in the CBD if they can afford to do so.

2.3.2 OUT OF THE SQUARE VENUES

<http://www.outofthesquare.net.au>

The 'Out of the Square' (OOTS) consortium members are the Shedley Theatre at Elizabeth, Golden Grove Arts Centre at Golden Grove, The Art Centre Port Noarlunga at Port Noarlunga, the Marion Cultural Centre at Oaklands Park, Star Theatres at Hilton, the Parks at Angle Park and the Barossa Arts & Convention Centre at Tanunda. These venues are owned by their respective local councils. The OOTS members have worked effectively with their councils and the Creative Director of the initiative (Malcolm Harslett) to provide a touring program of local artists for the suburbs and this has increased usage in these venues.

All the OOTS venues have unutilised capacity and should be marketed to local community and youth groups, the smaller theatre companies and to local dance schools as an alternative to the Union Hall for their end of year presentations.

2.4 EXISTING VENUES IN THE REGIONAL AREAS

<http://www.countryarts.org.au/catalogs/arts-centres.php>

South Australia's major regional performing arts centres— in Whyalla, Port Pirie, Mount Gambier and Renmark – are managed by Country Arts SA. Other regional venues are owned and operated either by local government (for example, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln and, from 2010, Murray Bridge) or, in one instance, by a school (the Brenton Langbein Theatre in Tanunda).

Each of the State's four major performing arts centres is showing its age and faces considerable challenges, being in dire need of general maintenance and technical upgrade. Regional touring shows currently have to travel to these and other large regional venues, such as the Nautilus Theatre in Port Lincoln and Yarta Purtli in Port Augusta, with their own basic equipment and this adds to the cost. Country Arts has suggested that an advocacy body such Circuit SA should be established to coordinate activities across the performing arts centres. (See section 8.3.2.)

2.5 WHAT HAS CLOSED IN THE PAST DECADE?

As stated earlier, the demolition of the Union Hall in the University of Adelaide is under discussion and rests with the Heritage Register. Use of the Scott Theatre is hampered by limited availability due to pressures for lecture spaces at the University of Adelaide.

In addition a number of city-based performing arts venues have gone out of commission in the last decade - the Madley Dance Space, the Lion Arts Centre and The Price Theatre. Respondents to the survey cited the closure or decommissioning of these venues as significant losses for the performing arts sector.

Other theatres are under threat of closure or face closure in the near future: Stars Theatres, Holden Street Theatres and possibly the Odeon.

2.6 GENERAL STATE OF EXISTING VENUES

There are currently not enough venues in Adelaide to support the level of activity during the peak periods of the Adelaide Festival and the Fringe. The venues listed above nearly all suffer from various problems.

Common to all - and cited by many performing arts companies are several factors which make South Australia's venues inadequate, outdated, run down and past their prime.

The lack of rehearsal space. A 'live' on-line register of available rehearsal space would assist with the coordination to allocate affordable rehearsal space for short-term hire.

RECOMMENDATION:

Arts SA to oversee the setting up of an on-line venue register that details availability of rehearsal space for short-term hire. Refer to section 8 – Renew Adelaide.

Outdated technical equipment. If the AFC were to upgrade its technical equipment there would be a 'spill' of equipment down through the venues because many of the smaller venues would love to receive the second hand equipment that should be made available by the larger venues.

RECOMMENDATION:

Arts SA to oversee the setting up of an on-line venue register that details technical equipment for sale or hire.

The continuing lack of funds for maintenance over a long period and lack of foyer and auditorium upgrades for established theatres paints a picture of general shabbiness.

RECOMMENDATION:

Arts SA to establish a 'maintenance fund' so that venues can apply for routine and on-going maintenance. This could be a competitive grant pool with successful venues attracting one-off maintenance grants or it could be on-going funding available to registered or selected venues granted on a % of revenue or usage basis.

Disabled Access: Add to this considerable problems with disabled access in most theatres (addressed in section 7).

RECOMMENDATION:

Arts SA to work with the Office of Disability and Client Services to create a funding pool for improvements in disability access in venues (refer to section 7).

3. WHAT IS IN DEVELOPMENT?

The State Government has committed funds to two significant developments; the new 2,500 capacity 'Black Box' space at the Entertainment Centre and the Film Hub for the SA Film Corporation at Glenside.

3.1 THE \$43 MILLION FILM HUB AT GLENSIDE

The Film Hub at Glenside will become the new home of the SA Film Corporation. Survey respondents from the Performing Arts sector do not currently consider the Glenside Film Hub will answer their need for additional live performance venues but it remains to be seen whether the new facilities will alleviate some of the need for spaces at peak times like the Festival and Fringe periods. At the time of writing the Adelaide Festival believes that the Film Hub will have the same constraints as the Queen's Theatre currently has because all infrastructure will have to be brought in for live performance and this will add considerably to the cost of the venue.

3.2 THE ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

The new \$52 million 'Black Box' at the Entertainment Centre is modelled on the highly regarded Carriageworks in Sydney. The funding for this initiative has come from the SA Tourism Commission. The Entertainment Centre will be connected to the CBD by an extended tram line.

It will be available for hire as a live performance venue for high end theatre productions. While the hire rates will be beyond the reach of small independent local companies, the building is welcomed by the Adelaide Festival for its potential for a flexible space with state of the art equipment.

The Production Manager at the Adelaide Festival cites the enabling attitude of the Entertainment Centre workers as a major plus. The Entertainment Centre has its own industrial award and is very clear about the charges that technical work will attract.

The Entertainment Centre is the most professional group in town. They have a different mindset; nothing is a problem and you know up-front what extra work will cost..... The Black Box at the Entertainment Centre is the new big hope for us.

Geoff Cobham, Adelaide Festival of Arts

The CEO of the Entertainment Centre acknowledges that there is a view in the arts sector that the venue is for commercial entertainment activities only. This has been exacerbated because the local arts community were not consulted in the planning stages of the venue. In order to shift this perception, he looks forward to the association with the 2010 Adelaide Festival. This will allow the venue to be branded as a premium quality multi arts venue. In

future the Entertainment Centre would like to take on the 'overspill' from the Festival Theatre during peak periods such as the Adelaide Festival.

The AFC has done a fantastic job to reinvigorate programming and so the Entertainment Centre will accommodate extra activity..... Both organisations make an important contribution to the social fabric of this state.

Anthony Kirchner, Entertainment Centre

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Entertainment Centre hold an open day for the local arts community to show the capabilities and the significance of the new 'Black Box' Theatre at the Entertainment Centre soon after it is completed. That a branding exercise be undertaken to promote the Theatre as a multi-purpose 'high arts' venue.

4. SEGMENTS OF THE PERFORMING ARTS SECTOR

The performing arts sector is made up of a number of different segments. Many SA artists move between these different sectors project by project as they follow funding opportunities and as they collaborate on different projects. These different segments have different venue and performance space needs.

4.1 SA'S SUBSIDISED MAINSTREAM COMPANIES

SA's subsidised mainstream companies funded by the Major Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council are the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, State Opera of SA and State Theatre Company of SA.

These companies mostly perform in the Adelaide Festival Centre complex – indeed, it is part of the AFCT charter to accommodate the home companies. The AFC aims to schedule other users around the needs of the home companies. State Opera and State Theatre are generally happy with the standard of the venues - issues of catering, marketing and ticketing aside.

There are certain tensions in the arrangement with home companies and the AFC.

The AFC CEO says that while the AFC charges subsidised rates to home companies, the expectation from Government is that they will generate two thirds of their income from venue hire.

The AFC is subsidising resident companies (SOSA, ASO, State Theatre and Windmill) to the tune of \$550,000 per annum in rental.

Douglas Gautier, AFC

Some home companies feel that they are perceived by the AFC as an 'inconvenience'.

The AFC feels that the resident companies could be more efficient in their use of the theatres.

AFC charges for home companies have risen at a greater rate than CPI; both the AFC and the home companies are put in a position of bargaining with each other to try to make their respective scarce resources stretch.

There is lack of clarity around the way that AFC accounts for the costs for its own entrepreneurial activities and the costs (and subsidies) provided to the home and other local companies. In the past, accounting for AFC activity deemed a minimum budget for home companies as sunk costs and then entrepreneurial activities above that line as the income generators.

The Adelaide Symphony Orchestra does not feel that the Festival Theatre is an adequate venue to house international artists; they want a new purpose built recital hall.

Adelaide is the only city that doesn't have a concert hall..... Look at the spending in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney and Perth – the sheer cultural infrastructure in other states has left us behind.

Rainer Jozeps, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

ARUP was commissioned by the ASO Board to undertake a preliminary study in March 2009 to consider suitable sites for a new concert hall. The Adelaide Convention Centre precinct was recommended for further consideration. This needs to be jointly considered by Arts SA and the SA Tourism Commission.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the proposal of a new recital hall be given further consideration.

4.2 OTHER LARGER COMPANIES

Other medium to larger companies include Australian Dance Theatre, Leigh Warren & Dancers, Windmill and Brink Productions Ltd.

These companies need performance venues that do justice to their professional standing in the sector. They generally use the AFC theatres. The Playhouse and Space are very satisfactory for their work. Understandably, during Festival and Fringe periods their work can be compromised by being relegated to less suitable venues because international and national visiting companies have first call on the AFC venues.

4.3 THE FESTIVALS

The Festivals include the Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts. The Adelaide Fringe, Come Out and Feast, as well as the AFC Festivals: OzAsia, Cabaret Festival and the Guitar Festival.

During the Adelaide Festival and Fringe all venues are placed under severe strain. As stated earlier, all Festivals benefit greatly from being concentrated around a recognisable and vibrant hub in the CBD – the 'walking distance' hub contributes to the uniqueness of the Adelaide Festival experience.

4.3.1 THE FESTIVAL OF ARTS

The Festival is 'stymied' if the Scott Theatre is lost.

Kate Gould, Adelaide Festival

Another venue suitable for housing international acts is desperately needed for this peak period. Most visiting companies want a flat floor warehouse style space with some facilities and some amenities. Building a new 'Black Box' in the CBD is the most desirable solution. Alternatively, fitting out the Queen's with lighting stock, flexible seating and dressing rooms to make it affordable could provide a viable option.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Arts SA consult with the Production Manager of the Adelaide Festival to investigate if fitting out the Queen's Theatre will alleviate the venue shortage during for future Festivals.

That Arts SA look at the creation of another new Black Box in the CBD; either purpose built or through retro fitting an existing building.

Short of creating a couple more 'Black Boxes' in the CBD, the strain during the Adelaide Festival and Fringe could be alleviated by:

- Brokering a deal with the University of Adelaide to get unrestricted access to the Scott Theatre for this period. This may involve offering the university an alternate nearby space to hold lectures during that period e.g. in the Adelaide Convention Centre.
- Brokering a deal with ACArts to get unrestricted access to the Main Theatre and the X Space for this period.
- Providing enabling legislation for the establishment of temporary venues (see 'The Fringe' below).
- Investigating the return of the Lion Arts Centre to live performance status.

These measures would have a flow on effect to the other Festivals like Feast and Come Out.

4.3.2 THE FRINGE

The Fringe used to run a range of venues - at great expense. The current strategy is to get performance groups to set up their own temporary venues. The Fringe will help find the empty spaces that are available and assist with the process of setting the venues up. They have developed a good set of guidelines to assist with the task.

[http://www.adelaidefringe.com.au/getdoc/4e11fd58-347a-45bc-b76f-483d9085d3e7/information-for-venues-venues-\(for-FERS\).aspx](http://www.adelaidefringe.com.au/getdoc/4e11fd58-347a-45bc-b76f-483d9085d3e7/information-for-venues-venues-(for-FERS).aspx)

Successful temporary venues require good will on the part of both the landlord and the artists involved. Landlords can assist by being flexible with scheduling (perhaps negotiating with regular hirers of the space to find alternatives during the Fringe) and by charging affordable rents. Artists can assist by treating the spaces with respect and by leaving them in a clean and restored state.

The chief impediments to temporary venues are twofold – access to equipment and hurdles to legislative compliance.

A) ACCESS TO EQUIPMENT

At peak times lighting, sound equipment, theatre curtains, rostra, temporary stages, temporary flexible seating and safety equipment (exit signs) are in high demand.

A lot of equipment can be bought in from interstate but SA would benefit from further equipment being made available locally. The establishment of an 'equipment bank' which assembles and stores equipment available for temporary hire would assist.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Arts SA investigate the possibility of establishing and managing an equipment bank which is stored in an inexpensive outer metropolitan location at non peak times.

B) LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Fringe has reported that licensing bodies make no distinction between temporary and permanent venues and place difficult restrictions on temporary licences. The Liquor License stipulations are at odds with other Police, Fire and insurance stipulations. The Liquor Licensing Tribunal has ultimate jurisdiction over all the other authorities. Groups wanting to set up a temporary venue are often sent from one authority to the next and they receive inconsistent advice within departments, unreasonable lists of conditions and contradictory advice from different departments. Artists report that they don't mind complying with appropriate legislation if only they could work out how to go about it. The process needs to

be streamlined. The story (told informally by Christie Anthoney) about Tuxedo Cat illustrates the frustrations.

This problem could be avoided through the establishment of a Temporary Theatre Licensing Act that coordinated all the different legal requirements.

At the time of writing the Adelaide City Council is planning to streamline the approval processes required for temporary venues within the Adelaide Council areas. The Council is currently undertaking a Review of the City By-Laws to see if they unduly prevent or restrict artists undertaking public performances or utilising venues and buildings in the short term for rehearsals or performances. Council will consider any related By-Law items as part of the identification and Review early in 2010.

(Further information will be available from Mike Thomas Manager Development and Environment Sciences, Adelaide City Council).

RECOMMENDATION:

Arts SA to commission a consultant with appropriate experience (suggest Christie Anthoney), a representative from the Adelaide City Council and a legal expert to work with all the different jurisdictions - the Liquor Licensing Tribunal, Adelaide City Council, Police, Metropolitan Fire Service and Insurance experts - to develop a Temporary Theatre Licensing Act that incorporates all the different legal requirements for the establishment of temporary venues.

4.3.3 WOMADELAIDE & OTHER FESTIVALS

WOMADelaide at Botanic Park and the Festivals associated with the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust (The Guitar Festival, Oz Asia and the Cabaret Festival) are festivals that work successfully in specific 'one location' venues and demonstrate how crucial the 'Festival hub' concept is to the success of festival spirit energy.

4.4 SMALL TO MEDIUM INDEPENDENT COMPANIES

Small to medium independent companies include Flying Penguin Productions, Floogle, Co-opera, The Border Project, Ladykillers, Vitalstatistix, Slingsby and Splash and independent practitioners such as freelance directors and designers. This sector of the arts community produces some excellent work under difficult conditions and grapples with lack of rehearsal space, no storage space and little or no money for venue hire. Some of these companies get rent relief from AFC to use the Space Theatre during the In-Space season.

There is a strong push for an independent curated space by many theatre practitioners in this sector. Professional directors are arguing for a venue in Adelaide that reflects the style

and professional calibre of their work. They feel that a venue that presents amateur work along-side professional work gives a confused branding message to audiences.

They want a new venue that is known and branded for the presentation of new work at the cutting edge and in the exciting vanguard of performance. This would be similar to The Performance Space (Sydney).

<http://www.performancespace.com.au/>

or the Arts House/Meat Market (Melbourne)

<http://www.thatsmelbourne.com.au/Placestogo/TheatreVenues/AllTheatreVenues/Pages/4448.aspx>

<http://www.theatrealive.com.au/venue/29>

Their arguments are outlined in more detail in the paper 'New Venue - SA Theatre Forum' submitted by Sam Haren on behalf of the group.

RECOMMENDATION:

That any consideration of a new venue (a 'Black Box' in the CBD) or a refurbished venue (such as the Bakehouse or the Queen's Theatre) takes into consideration the need for a curated space that strongly identifies with the production of new professional work.

That discussions be undertaken with the Bakehouse and the History Trust on behalf of the Queen's to ascertain whether either of these venues could, with funding assistance, fulfil this need.

4.5 YOUTH COMPANIES

Youth companies include Urban Myth, Restless, Kurruru, SYTE and Cirkidz as well as regional youth companies.

These companies generally have their own home bases and hire or find performance venues on a needs basis.

4.6 VARIOUS CLASSICAL MUSIC GROUPS

Various classical music groups include the Australian String Quartet, Adelaide Chamber Singers, The Adelaide Art Orchestra and the visiting artists such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Musica Viva groups.

The Town Hall, the Elder Hall and local churches accommodate the classical music sector. There are various problems with the size, acoustics, availability and audience comfort at

these venues. The smaller chamber groups have expressed the need for a small (400-seat) concert hall that does justice to the level of professionalism of the musicians involved in local and visiting Chamber groups.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the needs of professional music groups be considered if a new multi-purpose Black Box space is built in Adelaide.

4.7 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Educational institutions include schools, the TAFE Adelaide College of the Arts, Flinders University Drama and The Elder Conservatorium of Music.

The tertiary sector departments - ACArts, The Elder Conservatorium and Flinders Drama Centre - are well served for venues for performing arts teaching and presentations. (In the early 2000's, over \$80 million was spent on tertiary arts training infrastructure - \$33 million for ACArts, \$30 million for the SA School of Art, \$10 million on refurbishments to the Elder Conservatorium spaces and \$10 million at Flinders University Drama Centre).

The Federal Government stimulus package currently presents opportunities for development of school halls (Refer to section 2.2.7). With proper coordination, schools should be able to assist each other with access to venues on school campuses. The Odeon Theatre will remain available for hire in the short to medium term.

4.8 AMATEUR COMPANIES

Amateur companies such as the Gilbert & Sullivan Society and the Repertory Theatre Company attract significant audiences to their productions.

Through the 'Save Our Festival State' Facebook page, some amateur groups have been vocal in their dissatisfaction with the lack of availability of the Scott and the Union Hall. Many amateur companies are well served by the Arts Theatre. Other options are for the amateur companies to make more use of the OOTS theatres in the metropolitan areas. Larger productions such as the G & S Society and the MS Musicals can be accommodated at the Maj or work around the scheduling restrictions at the Scott Theatre.

5. CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Tastes in performing arts are changing. Booming sales for the Fringe and Cabaret Festival demonstrate that more unstructured performances - comedy, cabaret, physical theatre and contemporary music - appeal to a broad sector of the community.

In the face of increased competition from other art forms and other forms of entertainment, the 'high' arts struggle to grow their audience base. Classical music and opera appeal to older audiences and are at risk from factors like the Global Financial Crisis and its impact on the spending power of self-funded retirees. These art-forms are important but they are already served by the AFC venues; thinking about new spaces should go beyond the traditional proscenium arch theatres of the past.

Innovative performances often rely on a non-traditional relationship between audience and performer which is dictated by the venue and the configuration of the space. There is a growing recognition of the cross-over from performing arts to other art forms: digital, visual arts, circus and community arts in all its various expressions. Audiences are looking for an integrated complete experience; and so catering and ambience of the venue are crucial success factors as well as the performance itself.

Venues for the future must accommodate these factors.

In order to facilitate social behaviour, art spaces need to be places where people can commune with each other and with artists.

Lobbies need to be more than holding pens..... Perhaps we need a moratorium on the construction of traditional museums, concert halls, and proscenium theatres and we need to allow for the fact that if we want to engage new audiences, and work with contemporary artists, we need 21st century spaces.

Diane E. Ragsdale, Surviving the Culture Change

http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/39783/Surviving_the_Culture_Change_AU_Ragsdale_Final1.pdf

6. COMPARISON OF THE NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE VENUES

As stated earlier, SA is lagging behind other states in:

- The creation of new venues in the CBD around a hub.
- The maintenance and refurbishment of existing venues in the traditional theatre mode.
- Different and innovative performance spaces.
- Some consideration for a Black Box venue that can accommodate classical music (as well as other art forms?).

Many survey respondents cited thriving venues that they have observed interstate and overseas. An examination of these suggests that Adelaide needs to rethink the vision for its theatre spaces. Venues have a personality and can generate their own energy. Venues such as Belvoir Street in Sydney or the Malthouse in Melbourne have such strong branding that interstate visitors often check out what is on at that particular venue before they decide on what show to go to.

Steve Grieve, SA theatre architect, looked at performance spaces recently on his International Churchill Scholarship travels. He says that performance spaces in “the most successful and sustainable communities are those that combined more than one type of activity.”

For example, a theatre foyer combines with a gallery and a film studio or a bar, cafe and a bookshop. This can create a buzz for audiences and generate cross art-form collaborations.

Good examples for the creation of new work are:

- The Tramway in Glasgow. <http://www.tramway.org/general>
- The Battersea Arts Centre. <http://www.bac.org.uk>
- The Bush Theatre in Shepherd’s Bush UK <http://www.bushtheatre.co.uk>
- The Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh <http://www.traverse.co.uk/> which has a strong commitment to ground breaking new productions and is a good model for the curated space.

The Bush is a good example of one the independently run pub theatres in the UK.

The Traverse is an example of a theatre with a strong (professionally pitched) identity and a curated program.

Dan Clarke

- The Sage Gateshead is an exemplary venue that combines different music organizations under the one roof. <http://www.sagegateshead.co.uk>

The Sage Gateshead is an amazing home for live music consisting of outstanding performance spaces of acoustic excellence (Hall One and Hall Two), Northern Rock Foundation Hall for rehearsal and performance, a twenty-five room Music Education Centre, ExploreMusic (a music information resource centre run by Gateshead Libraries and Arts in the Joan and Margaret Halbert Space), The Barbour Room (a sunny entertainment room), plus four bars, The Michael Straker Café and a brasserie.

You can visit the building free - up to 14 hours a day.

<http://www.sagegateshead.co.uk>

Sage Gateshead is three music organizations under one roof- a fabulous venue with a great main auditorium.

Steve Grieve

7. DISABILITY ACCESS

Gaelle Mellis is a disabled artist who has worked as a designer for SA theatre, dance and events for over twenty years. She also serves on the Minister's Disability Advisory Council SA. Gaelle received a 2004 Churchill Fellowship and her extensive experience in cultural accessibility and diversity within an arts context inform this section of the audit.

Disability access is a vital consideration for the refurbishment of existing venues and in the creation of new venues. Many respondents acknowledge that existing venues are deficient, especially the older venues which have non-existent or inadequate disabled access for audiences. There is not one fully accessible space in Adelaide. (Fully accessible is defined as having full disabled access to all front-of-house and backstage areas.)

Gaelle states that we need to change the attitude of interior designers and architects to address these problems; it is not just about lifts and ramps. For example, she cites the heavy doors, thick pile carpet and inaccessible bio (control) boxes at the AFC as being deficient. Clear signage should be mandatory with the universal access symbols used for people with ESL and learning difficulties. Proximity to public transport and easy parking or good drop off points is important.

An exemplary company with a fully accessible venue is Graeae Theatre Company in the UK.

Graeae has now moved to a groundbreaking new workspace in East London. The new offices and state-of-the-art rehearsal space have access at the core of the design. This is the first of its kind in the UK and continues Graeae's role as a force for change in disabled theatre and in progressing mainstream theatre.

Graeae has been working with Artillery Architecture and Interior Design, to convert the former tram-sheds on Kingsland Road in Hackney into a building which will be a visible model of inclusive creative practice.

Everything has been informed by Graeae's unique approach to creative access: from tactile flooring to sensitive heating systems, acoustics and scented trees to adaptable work services and bright stylish WCs. The space has an urban yet off-beat feel and is a world away from the institutional buildings often associated with disabled people.

<http://graeae.org/page/home>

Graeae gets it right with a fully accessible venue. They don't tour to venues that are not accessible. The Arts Council in the UK has made changes at a physical and an attitudinal level.

Gaelle Mellis, SA Theatre Designer

The principles of 'Universal Design' provide a good guide to making buildings more accessible and should be factored into the design brief for new and refurbished venues in the future.

Universal Design Principles work for the whole community.

Gaëlle Mellis, SA Theatre Designer

RECOMMENDATION:

Any refurbishments of existing venues and planning for new venues should factor in the Principles of 'Universal Design' at the design stage.

8. HOW TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF A SHORTAGE OF VENUES IN SA?

This report has already contained a number of suggestions and specific recommendations. Not all of these are easily implemented and there are limited resources to build venues on the 'wish list'. The overwhelming 'wish list' request was for new affordable Black Boxes in the CBD, professionally run - but with more physical, staffing and attitudinal flexibility than the AFC - and with some of the multi-art form hub characteristics described above.

In addition there are various initiatives that can help address the venue shortage.

8.1 LEADERSHIP

At present there is no central coordination to plan for SA venues.

The groundswell of concern for the future of the performing arts would suggest that the time has come for this – just as in the early 2000's the need for improved infrastructure for arts training in SA gained traction across the State and Federal Government and through the Universities and DFEEST. In that case, the sum of the whole has become greater than the parts.

There have been numerous debates about the Riverbank precinct and how SA can enliven its cultural boulevard. The North Terrace upgrade has begun the vision and this now needs to embrace an effective creation of a vibrant hub west of King William Street to add to the excellent work already started by the AFC. This requires large and long-term vision.

RECOMMENDATION:

There should be consideration and planning for a new model of an affordable, flexible, multi use, curated and subsidized hub incorporating a new performance spaces, cafes and art gallery etc. The hub would include spaces for music (a 400-seat recital hall and possibly a concert hall), small size 250-seat and medium size 600-seat Black Boxes

The new hub should demonstrate best practice for disability access. It should have a strong curatorial vision. It should have great flexibility in its staffing structure.

It should take into consideration the need for a strong CBD geographical focus which links the cultural boulevard of the museum, art gallery and library around either:

- **the AFC, The Adelaide Convention Centre, down to Light Square and embracing the Higher Ground, the Queen's Theatre, ACArts and the Lion Arts Centre.**
- **Or the current RAH site.**

The vision needs strong political leadership.

After its economy hit rock bottom in the early 90s, Victoria embraced large-scale urban projects including the ever-expanding Southbank and Federation Square cultural precincts. Former Premier Jeff Kennett claims that in the 90's, \$1 bn was spent on new arts infrastructure in the state..... Kennett came to power when the Victorian economy was on its knees and he eventually took on the arts portfolio with gusto. He says that to advance the arts, "you have got to have the passionate support of either the premier or the treasurer."

Rosemary Neill, The Australian 12-13 December 2009

As with any government funded building project of this complexity, the implementation would need clear coordination across government departments.

It is crucial that all relevant government departments communicate in the formulation and planning for ANY new performance spaces in SA; whether they are at smaller end of the scale – school halls which double as performance spaces – right up to consideration of major future developments such as those floated above.

RECOMMENDATION:

Arts SA to convene a 'future venue' stakeholder steering group to meet regularly to assess needs, to communicate changes to existing arts venues and to co-ordinate planning for new performance venues.

The interdepartmental government and stakeholder steering group would draw membership from representatives of Arts SA, Tourism, Heritage, DECS, DFEEST, DTEI, the Office for Recreation & Sport), the universities and local government, (the Adelaide City Council).

8.2 THE WILL TO COOPERATE

A culture of mutual cooperation can help solve some of the problems with current venues. For example, if educational institutions were to demonstrate more flexibility in making their venues available at peak times it would assist with the current shortage. In return, Arts organisations would need to be proactive in suggesting and brokering alternatives for lecturing spaces during these peak times.

As a larger company, State Opera sees it as part of its community obligation to make its Opera Studio space available to smaller companies. Big companies and organisations should help smaller companies and emerging artists (their future supply chain) as much as they can.

Artists need an understanding of landlord considerations and they need to treat venues with respect.

History has proved that a 'can do' attitude can go a long way to solving accommodation problems or to living with less than perfect spaces. Many of the most successful spaces are and will remain less than perfect but they will still carry the energy and generate the creativity so essential to the arts experience.

Mentoring/training of Venue Managers. Venue Managers and entrepreneurs can make or break a venue. They need to consider profitability, curatorial considerations and marketing and they need a good understanding of the business of theatre and of emerging trends. They need a strong curatorial vision. Training and assistance for venue managers should be available through mentoring opportunities, exposure to exemplary models interstate and overseas and small grants to develop skills needed.

8.3 COORDINATION & INFORMATION SHARING

In addition to the stakeholder steering group mentioned earlier there are a number of models that survey respondents have cited that merit investigation.

8.3.1 A VENUE REGISTER

Two models have been suggested:

1) Renew Adelaide

A newly formed live web-site of available spaces. There are already two drivers (Ianto Ware and Brigid Noone) for Renew Adelaide.

<http://www.format.net.au/#8> and <http://renewnewcastle.org/about>

There are over 1,300 Facebook members of Renew Adelaide who have joined in the past month and a lively on-line debate about how to make the initiative a success.

This not-for-profit model has been developed in Newcastle. The success of the model appears to lie in its flexibility; disused commercial spaces are made available to artists in the short term and landlords are given a guarantee of the venue being cleaned up and used in return for cheap or minimal rent.

This initiative merits further investigation and possible assistance.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Arts SA meet with the drivers of Renew Adelaide (Ianto Ware and Brigid Noone) to suggest possible avenues of assistance to help Renew Adelaide get established.

2) SpaceBank

SpaceBank in Tasmania is a fledgling similar (but simpler?) model to Renew Newcastle. It matches artists with landlords.

Unoccupied properties receive a fresh lease of life through SpaceBank, which matches Tasmanian artists with empty spaces for use as studios and rehearsal spaces. SpaceBank has been developed by the AbaF and arts@work in response to a shortage of spaces where artists can create, develop and rehearse their work.

<http://www.arts.tas.gov.au/textonly.aspx?id=136&intID=1364>

8.3.2 AN ADVOCACY BODY

Two models have been suggested:

1) Circuit SA

The outer metropolitan and country areas would particularly benefit from an advocacy body such as VAPAC in Victoria. <http://www.vapac.org.au>

This would promote, support and foster a network of performing arts centres, would promote and strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders and would provide leadership in the development of the arts industry's best practice in performing arts programming, presentation, venue management and community cultural development.

2) A Theatres Trust

A not-for-profit theatre venue management/lobby body. This is based on the model in the UK <http://www.theatretrust.org.uk>

The Theatres Trust in the UK is the government's adviser on theatres, provides a range of advisory services, is a statutory consultee on planning applications, and develops the debate on what makes a good theatre. The Theatres Trust has been responsible for saving many of the theatres in the UK - if a theatre is demolished there another has to be built.

8.3.3. Resource allocation body - the Equipment Bank described in Section 4.3.2.(a).

8.3.4. Legislative Changes - Temporary venue act – described in Section 4.3.2.(b).

8.3.5. Availability of information for establishment of temporary spaces - for artists, landlords as detailed in the Fringe Venues Handbook, described in section 4.3.2.

8.3.6. Availability of information and planning assistance for schools – described in section 2.2.7.

9. CONCLUSION: NEW BUILDINGS – ARE THEY NEEDED?

At the top of the 'wish list' for the majority of SA arts practitioners and organisations is a new affordable flexible Black Box in a multi-arts hub in the CBD. This would serve the Festival during peak times and serve as the cutting edge professional curated space for local artists of various disciplines. It would be part of the larger vision for the City of Adelaide and ideally be located on the Riverbank precinct. It would help restore SA as the pre-eminent Festival State. (Summary Recommendation 6).

More immediate solutions involve the upgrading of equipment and facilities in existing venues. With modest to medium scale financial assistance some venues are capable of serving the arts community and audiences much better. (Summary Recommendations 3 - 5).

Finally, better coordination and information sharing in a range of ways can assist with alleviating the problem. As a first step the establishment of a venue body is recommended. (Summary Recommendations 1 & 2).

RECOMMENDATION:

Establish an umbrella organisation for venues with the working title VENUE SA.

Based on a membership model and with core funding from Arts SA for a small staff it would:

- **Foster collaboration between venues and artists.**
- **Convene the interdepartmental and stakeholder steering groups.**
- **Assist with co-ordination and information sharing.**
- **Co ordinate the training and mentoring opportunities for venue managers.**
- **Oversee a venue and equipment register.**
- **Monitor the state of SA's venues.**
- **Advocate for the retention, maintenance and planning for appropriate venues.**

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This audit provides a snapshot of the current situation. Many arts organisations and individuals responded to requests in a tight timeline for the gathering of the information. They have contributed most generously with constructive suggestions.

The level of interest in response to this audit has demonstrated the commitment of the local arts community to work in a constructive way to help address the shortage of performance venues in SA.

Elizabeth (Libby) Raupach OAM

January 2010