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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an independent, expert view of the current situation regarding performing arts venues that are both purpose built for performance and provide access to performing arts practitioners in Christchurch city. It is intended to assist decision making and to inform the CERA Planning and Community Toolset (PACT).

An Optimum Facilities Matrix outlines the agreed list of well-appointed venues that a city of the size of Christchurch would ideally have to successfully deliver to the needs of the performing arts sector.

The research scope is limited to Tier 1 venues, defined as purpose built for performing arts with clean access for performing arts presentation. This is contrasted in particular with Tier Two venues, defined as purpose built for performing arts but with priority access for specific (non-arts) communities or organizations.

Research was largely conducted in the form of site-visits and face-to-face interviews. It was revealed that while several venues are on track to meet the needs as prescribed in the Optimum Facility Matrix, many are still either uncertain or missing. The lack of a mid-scale venue suited to both classical and/or contemporary concerts has been identified. In addition there is still considerable risk attached to the achievement of a ‘black box’ physical theatre/dance venue and a theatre suited to community/independent sector artists.

Recommendations:

1. Review the role that James Hay Theatre will play as a key mid-sized venue in consultation with arts sector groups. This facility has a real opportunity to play a key role in addressing the current gaps in the city’s venue infrastructure.

2. Actively re-engage with two of the key tenants of the Performing Arts Precinct, Court Theatre and Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. Concerns they hold about how their needs will be accommodated in the Performing Arts Precinct need to be addressed to enable both companies to find a viable alternative to current suburban locations. The future of the current Court Theatre Shed has also been identified as having the potential to play a key role for the community/independent theatre sector and its future should be clarified.

3. Actively support the development of the black box theatre spaces for contemporary performance, both the Performance Movement Centre and a YMCA building conversion project, to ensure the current projects progress. Failure of both projects will present a significant setback for the city’s contemporary sector.

4. Undertake a comprehensive analysis of the operating models for each facility to ensure that the potential of the built facility will be fully realized with the appropriate organizational structures and processes in place.

5. Continue to recognise the benefits that accrue from the creation of clusters of facilities and ensure that complementary private investment is encouraged.
INTRODUCTION

Ministry for Culture and Heritage (MCH), under advice from the wider JAG group, agreed to commission this report in December 2013.

The impetus for the report came from concerns expressed by the local community regarding the lack of clarity around venue development.

The report provides an independent, expert view of the current situation and is intended to help populate the CERA Planning and Community Toolset (PACT) and assist venue developers and users in their decision making.

PURPOSE

This report seeks to provide an independent assessment of performing arts venues in Christchurch with a focus on venues – both existing and planned – that are purpose built for performance and that provide clean access to performing arts practitioners (Tier 1 Venues).

Venues have been assessed in terms of suitability to meet a specific need outlined in the Optimum Facility Matrix (Table 1), as established prior to the City Blueprint.

BACKGROUND

An Optimum Facility Matrix for Christchurch was developed prior to the Central City Recovery Plan (CCRP) and outlined an agreed list of well-appointed venues that a city of the size of Christchurch would ideally have to successfully deliver to the needs of the both the performing arts sector and its audiences (see below).

The CCRP subsequently identified the need to provide homes for the Court Theatre, Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and Music Centre of Christchurch as key anchor tenants of a proposed Performing Arts Precinct (PAP) to be built in a quadrant to the north east of Cathedral Square. The notion of place-making and the inclusion of an outdoor amphitheatre was also part of the overall design.

Figure 1 central city Performing Arts Precinct concept
The PAP was originally to include a performing arts centre comprised of two acoustically sophisticated auditoria (with 1,500 and 500 seats respectively) for the performing arts sector in the presumed loss of Christchurch Town Hall.

The subsequent decision to retain Christchurch Town Hall means that consideration must now be given to how a reinstated facility containing two key venues – Douglas Lilburn Auditorium and James Hay Theatre – can meet the identified needs of the city.

In addition, almost three years on from the February 2011 quake, almost all of the key arts companies have made use of temporary venues and in some cases, progressed plans that may not align with the original PAP concept. Other members of the sector not previously catered for with Tier 1 Venues, such as the dance/physical theatre community, have progressed new initiatives in partnership with other stakeholders.

A current snapshot of the performance venue landscape is therefore required to accurately understand the current venue context of Christchurch.

**Table 1: Optimum Facilities Matrix for central Christchurch**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>A large auditorium suitable for civic events, festivals and large-scale performances (i.e. seating over 2000, plus onstage and backstage capacity for big orchestras (90+), choirs (150+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>A mid size seated auditorium acoustically suitable for traditional /symphonic / chamber music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>A fully equipped theatre with fly tower, wings, large backstage area and orchestra pit for staged productions (ballet, opera, musicals etc) seating audiences of c 1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>At least one theatre dedicated to a full time professional theatre company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>A 500 – 600 seated / 1000 standing flexible mid size venue to accommodate touring groups, contemporary music / jazz / folk / rock and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>At least one theatre suited to community theatre groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>A dance and physical theatre 'black box' performance space with moveable staging and seating (200-400) and flexible state-of-the-art technical capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>An outdoor amphitheatre / performance space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The matrix was submitted to Christchurch City Council most recently in August 2013 to guide decision-making and has been checked regularly with the sector to ensure currency. Interaction with sector leaders during the research for this report indicated continued endorsement.
RESEARCH SCOPE AND VENUE DEFINITIONS

1. ANALYSIS OF TIER 1 VENUES

Research was focused on existing and proposed venues purpose built for performing arts with clean access for performing arts presentation defined as Tier 1 venues (refer to Table 2: Venue Categories).

The current CERA Planning and Community Toolset (PACT) lists almost 300 performances spaces in Christchurch. This includes any built space that has the potential to host some type of performance and extends to churches, halls and cafes.

While useful to understand the breadth of venue opportunities, a more detailed understanding of the restrictions of these venues was required to provide meaningful information to guide future investment in the venue infrastructure.

Venues were therefore divided into the following tiers to distinguish those that provide a key role in the professional infrastructure and those that fulfill an occasional or site-specific role.

Table 2: Venue Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
<td>Purpose built for performing arts: clean access for performing arts presentation</td>
<td>Isaac Theatre Royal</td>
<td>Specifically constructed to deliver mid- to large scale theatrical events; accessible throughout the year for use by performing arts companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>Purpose built for performing arts: priority access for specific community e.g. school, faith group, business</td>
<td>Aurora Centre, Burnside High School</td>
<td>Built as a venue for performance within an education organization. Priority access granted to education activities. External arts clients’ access generally limited to late afternoons, no access on Sundays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>Fit for purpose: access variable: performance specification suitability (acoustics etc.) limited</td>
<td>St. Michael’s Church</td>
<td>Highly suitable for acoustic music performance, challenging for amplified music and unsuited to theatrical performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 4</td>
<td>Found space</td>
<td>Disused industrial/Retail Space</td>
<td>Example: a vacant industrial space used to stage for a zombie-themed immersive theatre experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key terms

*Purpose Built:* a facility that has been specifically built for the presentation of performing arts events to an audience; or a facility that has been intentionally converted from its original purpose to become a space dedicated to the presentation of performing arts events.

*Clean Access:* able to be accessed by groups whose primary focus is to provide a performing arts experience (either professional or community) without unreasonable restrictions relating to requirements e.g. season length, daytime usage, sound restrictions etc.

*Fit for Purpose:* well suited for the presentation of a specific kind of event, but suitability may be limited to certain performance genre.

*Found Space:* a location whose primary purpose is not for presentation of performing arts but that has been selected for a specific event, often with the deliberate intention of providing an unusual or unique artistic experience.

**James Hay Theatre**

The report also acknowledges the significance of the James Hay Theatre (JHT) and the role it can play in the future of the city’s infrastructure. While clearly a Tier One Venue its current configuration does not directly address the needs of the Optimal Facility Matrix.

At the time of the research (January 2014) there remained a lack of clarity regarding what could be achieved during the Town Hall restoration project within the existing budget. As a result discussion of this theatre is placed within the Recommendations section of this report.

Any recommendations contained in this report relating to this venue are made to provide a starting point for further discussion to ensure all possibilities are explored. However, it is acknowledged that final decisions will be subject to the financial or physical constraints of the project.

Despite JHT’s current limitations the commitment by Council to the refurbishment of the venue was noted in the research of the report. This commitment pre-dates the quakes of 2010 and 2011 and consultation with stakeholders has recently been reviewed to bring the findings up to date.

2. **CONSIDERATION OF THE ROLE OF TIER 2 VENUES**

As a result of the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, many of the Tier 2 (and some Tier 3) venues have become key locations for the presentation of professional productions. The obvious example is Burnside High School’s Aurora Centre, but there are many others. While access is by definition limited for performing arts groups, even restricted access has been a vital asset during the city’s recovery.

It should be noted that reliance on Tier 2 venues does not provide a sustainable way forward for the future development of the performing arts sector. Tier 2 venues are typically found in one of two
contexts; either education facilities or within contemporary places of worship. In both cases the primary objective is to provide an outcome distinct from a performing arts experience.

While these centres may be highly suitable for some genre of performance, their use by performing arts companies will always be secondary to the primary need of the facility. This means that access is highly restricted, and even actual content of performance may be restricted to align with the organization’s own set of values. In addition the suburban location of these facilities diffuses the ability to cluster and/or develop a hub within the CBD.

OUTSIDE SCOPE

The following areas were not considered as part of this review:

a. the provision of venues that are not listed on the Matrix;
b. factors contributing to the development of a central city hub or cluster of venues i.e. some venues identified as fulfilling a need sit outside the CBD;
c. analysis of the proposed business models that will/should sit behind the management of the venues; and
d. facilities which may have the potential to address some of the needs identified in the Matrix with significant restoration but are currently listed for demolition.

This report is concerned solely with suitability of a building or facility to meet identified venue needs of the city. It does not consider heritage or other values. For this reason, while the potential of heritage buildings such as the Odeon and Majestic Theatres and Maclean’s Mansion were noted in the researching of this report, they were deemed to be outside its scope as they are not Tier 1 venues.
METHODOLOGY

Individual face-to-face interviews and, where appropriate, site visits were conducted between 14 and 17 January 2014. Additional interviews were conducted by telephone.

The following representatives of key sector organizations were interviewed:

- Neil Cox, Chief Executive, Isaac Theatre Royal
- Andre Lovatt, Chief Executive, The Arts Centre Christchurch
- Liam Nolan, Project Director Major Facilities Rebuild, Christchurch City Council
- Ross Gumbley, Artistic Director, Court Theatre
- David Watkins, Manager, Repertory Theatre
- Turloguh Carolan, Business Development Manager, V-Base
- Martin Trusttum, Stakeholder Manager Creative Industries, CPIT (incl. Art Box, CHART)
- Adam Hayward, Artistic Director Dance & Performance, Movement Centre, Arts Voice
- Bronwyn Bijl, Director, Music Centre of Christchurch
- Gretchen La Roche, General and Artistic Manager, Christchurch Symphony Orchestra
- Steve Clarke, Investment Facilitator, Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority
- Josie Ogden, Chief Executive, YMCA Christchurch
- Luke Di Soma, Director, Christchurch Pops Choir & Arts Voice,
- Diane Brodie, QSM, President, ShowBiz

The interviewees were asked to provide detailed information regarding the technical specification of their existing or planned venues and to outline their planned use of venue and target art forms and audiences.
FINDINGS

This section addresses each venue outlined in the Optimum Facilities Matrix and identifies a current project that has been identified as providing a complete or partial solution.

A. A LARGE AUDITORIUM SUITABLE FOR CIVIC EVENTS, FESTIVALS AND LARGE-SCALE PERFORMANCES I.E. SEATING OVER 2000, PLUS ONSTAGE AND BACKSTAGE CAPACITY FOR BIG ORCHESTRAS (90+), CHOIRS (150+)

The decision by Christchurch City Council to retain Christchurch Town Hall has confirmed that the complex will remain a key part of the city’s cultural infrastructure. A reinstatement of Douglas Lilburn Auditorium will therefore be able to fully address the needs outlined above.

1. DOUGLAS LILBURN AUDITORIUM, CHRISTCHURCH TOWN HALL

Location: 86 Kilmore Street, Christchurch Central

Website: http://www.vbase.co.nz/venues/christchurch-town-hall

In its original configuration, the Auditorium was able to accommodate up to 2,354 in tiered-seating. The raised stage area was able to accommodate an orchestra of up to 120 players, with choir seating for a 400-voice choir. There were no staging facilities for theatrical productions.

The Auditorium was able to deliver large-scale concert music and civic events successfully, with an appropriate acoustic for symphonic music. Some deficiencies were perceived with the back of house facilities and inadequate assembly areas and dressing rooms. The project team currently plans to address these concerns and believe it can be achieved within budget via consultation with user groups.

In addition the rebuild project provides an opportunity to address aspects of the front of house/foyer design that betrays the venue’s 40 years of operation. All work is to be conducted with the understanding that the building has Heritage 1 status under the City Plan.

Current timelines being considered by Council plan for a construction order for 2014 to be followed by a three-year construction period. This would result in the reinstatement of the Auditorium and foyer by 2017, although a staged opening of the Auditorium earlier is being investigated.
B. MID SIZE SEATED AUDITORIUM ACOUSTICALLY SUITABLE FOR TRADITIONAL
/SYMPHONIC/CHAMBER MUSIC

The challenge when identifying venues that may address the needs as outlined above is an agreed definition for the term ‘mid-size; this can arguably range from 300 up to 1,200 seats. There are currently two proposals in development that could meet some, or all, of the needs or this category.

1. MUSIC CENTRE OF CHRISTCHURCH

**Location:** To be constructed as part of Performing Arts Precinct, Armagh Street (Near Cnr Colombo Street), Christchurch Central

**Website:** [http://www.musiccentre.org.nz/](http://www.musiccentre.org.nz/)

This Music Centre of Christchurch (MCC) is planned to be constructed as part of the PAP and will provide a purpose-built 300-350 seat concert hall with flat floor and removable seating. Alongside the venue, the building will also house spaces for rehearsing, teaching, examining, and arts administration as well as two smaller concert spaces.

The raised-stage recital hall will be built in a traditional shoe-box configuration with acoustics designed specifically for music performance, with a flat floor and removable seating.

Two soundproofed performance rooms with a capacity of up to 100 people will also be available for casual hire. Soundproofed spaces suitable for practice rooms or teaching/composing/study purposes are also provided, as are the open-plan and enclosed office spaces.

The main venue will be designed to present acoustic music extremely successfully, and may be able to manage some limited forms of amplified music. Some spoken word performances such as poetry or comedy are also likely to be delivered well. The ability to successfully deliver more theatrical productions will be limited due to the staging and back of house facilities that will be available. The venue will therefore successfully meet part of the need identified in Venue (B), but will not deliver larger scale concerts beyond 350. There is also potential in flat-floor mode to be able to deliver to the needs of smaller scale rock gigs, though it will not be able to address the larger scale demands of Venue (E).

The centre has received $2.5 m from the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust, as well insurance contributions that will enable the build, with current planning aiming for a 2015 opening. Extended delays in land transfer, however, could lead MCC to consider other options outside the PAP.
2. CHRISTCHURCH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HANGAR 4 AT AIRFORCE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND

Location: 45 Harvard Avenue, Wigram

Website: http://www.cso.co.nz and http://www.airforcemuseum.co.nz

Prior to the February 2011 earthquakes the CSO Foundation had reached a cost sharing agreement with the Christchurch City Council to purchase the Salvation Army Citadel building adjacent to the Christchurch Town Hall. It was intended that this facility would provide administration and rehearsal space for the orchestra as well as providing easy access to the Town Hall. The loss of this building post quakes has led to the CSO leasing temporary warehouse space in the outer suburb of Hornby to house their office, music library and rehearsal facilities.

With the Town Hall currently closed the CSO is currently performing in a variety of venues throughout the city, none of which are purpose built for orchestral performance. Their primary performance venue is now in the Air Force Museum of New Zealand (AFMNZ)in Hornby. As its primary purpose is not a concert space, lack of heating and external noise (e.g. wind and rain) can prove to be problematic during performances.

The current CCRP proposal includes CSO presence in the PAP with a home for administration, music library and a dedicated rehearsal space. The original proposal for the construction of a 1,500-seat concert space, however, has been superseded by the intention to reinstate the Town Hall.

CSO have also considered the concept of converting an aircraft hangar near AFMNZ to a fit-for-purpose permanent 1,200 seat concert facility that would also provide rehearsal and administration space for the orchestra. The concept is for an open stage with reflective surfaces making it ideally suited to the acoustic needs of orchestral, chamber and choral music as well as potential for bands and other amplified music based performance.

This concept would be developed in partnership with Ngai Tahu Corporation for the use of the land and the facility but preliminary estimates indicate a cost shortfall of $2M - $3M. Discussions with some funders in 2013 indicated a reluctance to have the CSO move to Hangar 4. This appears to be mainly due to concerns about the loss of CSO from the original PAP concept and the effect this might have on the creation of a central city arts hub. Should the CSO proceed with the Hangar 4 option they intend to present concerts in Christchurch Town Hall when it re-opens in the future.

If fully funded, CSO believes this venue could be ready by 2016.
C. A FULLY EQUIPPED THEATRE WITH FLY TOWER, WINGS, LARGE BACKSTAGE AREA AND ORCHESTRA PIT FOR STAGED PRODUCTIONS (BALLET, OPERA, MUSICALS ETC) SEATING AUDIENCES OF C 1200

The needs of this venue category will be directly addressed with the restored Isaac Theatre Royal.

1. ISAAC THEATRE ROYAL (ITR)

Location: 145 Gloucester Street, Christchurch Central

Website: http://www.isaactheatreroyal.co.nz/

Extensive earthquake strengthening work undertaken in 1998/99 ensured the survival of this heritage building despite significant damage.

Currently closed for the final stages of an extensive rebuild & repair programme, the main auditorium will provide a large proscenium arch stage with a height of 7.2 metres, width of 10.9 metres and depth of 15 metres, and allow for an audience capacity of up to 1,290.

The venue is scheduled to reopen mid October 2014.

The 2-year rebuild project has also provided an opportunity to further enhance the technical and production capabilities of the theatre. Disability accessibility will be significantly improved and elevator access will link all three foyer levels. Lighting and sound desks and equipment will be updated, including wireless capability for production, while the installation of surround-sound and digital projection equipment will allow for state of the art cinematic presentation.

The project will also deliver a 170 m² Community Performing Arts Space. While not addressing the needs of the Optimal Venue Matrix, this addition will provide a flat floor venue with removable seating for 100-120. With dimensions of 11.75m x 14.5m and a height of 4m, this will be a highly flexible space well suited for small theatrical productions, rehearsals, concerts, corporate events and seated banquets. The current business plan is that this will also provide a cost-effective, professional, intimate space for community arts groups.
Of most significance, however, is the potential impact of the installation of a hydraulic pit-lift across the front edge of the stage beyond the proscenium arch. This has real potential to improve the suitability of the venue for the staging of orchestral events, and may be able to address some of the needs outlined in Venue (B), the “mid size seated auditorium”, with a much larger capacity than that provided by Music Centre of Christchurch.

Without a dedicated acoustic concert design it is unlikely that ITR will be able to deliver an acoustic at the same level as a purpose-built concert hall facility. Nevertheless, there may be some orchestral events that will be highly suited to the venue due to its capacity and atmosphere (e.g. more populist or ‘event’ style programming such as Christmas, ‘themes from the movies’, etc).

D. AT LEAST ONE THEATRE DEDICATED TO A FULL TIME PROFESSIONAL THEATRE COMPANY

1. COURT THEATRE – NEW HOME, TO BE CONSTRUCTED AS PART OF PERFORMING ARTS PRECINCT

Location: To be constructed as part of Performing Arts Precinct, Armagh Street (near Cnr Colombo Street), Christchurch Central

Current plans for PAP include the construction of a new home for Court Theatre. Its inclusion in the CCRP plan provides the city with a unique opportunity to position Christchurch performing arts at the forefront of the national arts sector.

The company wishes to construct a purpose-built home facility to house all departments of the organization, including administration, design, workshop and rehearsal space alongside two performance spaces suited to theatrical performance.

The main space will be a modern interpretation of the Georgian ‘horseshoe’ auditorium, which allows for a thrust stage with the audience wrapped tightly around over multiple levels. This venue will seat no more than 400.

A second studio space will also be constructed to replace the former Forge Theatre, with a capacity of around 150.
It is intended that both spaces will be fully programmed by Court Theatre. While there may be some opportunities for external productions, these are more likely to be presenting partnerships rather than external hires.

The company is actively exploring and developing venue options and the current timeframe is for construction in 2016-17. There remains, however, a lack of clarity about the final financial arrangements relating to a presence for the Court Theatre in PAP. The company expects Christchurch City Council to clarify the financial position in the next few months.

The company has operated under a highly successful business model and its return to presentation within a year of the loss of its original Arts Centre venue has led to the retention of its pre-quake audience. It remains one of the largest theatre companies in NZ and the only company with full in-house production facilities.

Securing the company’s venues within PAP will be a key factor in ensuring immediate activation.

E. A 500 – 600 SEATED / 1000 STANDING FLEXIBLE MID SIZE VENUE TO ACCOMMODATE TOURING GROUPS, CONTEMPORARY MUSIC / JAZZ / FOLK / ROCK AND PERFORMANCE

The concept of a flat-floor auditorium addresses a gap that was identified pre-quake, and was subsequently included in the Optimum Facility matrix.

Currently, no single project aims to address this gap.

F. AT LEAST ONE THEATRE SUITED TO COMMUNITY THEATRE GROUPS

With the loss of the Repertory Theatre in central Christchurch, a valuable 400-seat theatre was lost from the venue infrastructure. The home company operated as a non-professional producer within the venue, staging three to five productions annually. Outside these seasons the venue was hired for a variety of other productions, ranging from community groups to professional music concerts and included regular use by key regional festivals such as Buskers Festival, BODY Festival and Christchurch Book Festival.
Repertory Theatre Society still retains ownership of the vacant site of the original theatre building, a large mixed-use zone at 146 Kilmore Street. The society also holds the insurance money for the lost building. While many in the organization are keen to see a return to the original site, they are also open to discussing all options. Currently, a full rebuild on the original site would be beyond the means of the organization, and its members are willing to consider other options.

There are currently two possible solutions other than a full rebuild of Repertory Theatre that have the potential to deliver to the needs of community/independent theatre.

1. COURT THEATRE ‘SHED’

**Location:** Bernard Street, Addington


The current transitional venue for The Court Theatre is located in a disused grain store in the city-fringe suburb of Addington.

This is a large, 2,800 square-metre facility, 11 metres at its highest point, with over 100 on-site car parks.

A tiered-seating studio venue of 388 has been constructed within the shed, acoustically and thermally insulated from the rest of the building with Kingspan panels. In addition, the building houses the company’s workshop, rehearsal spaces and administration.

This is an adapted, and not a purpose-built building. However, the venue itself effectively provides a purpose-built Tier 1 venue in a converted space. The wrap around seating configuration provides an intimate relationship to the stage and the acoustic works successfully for dramatic performance.

There are still some challenges to the ongoing operation of the facility. Outside the theatre, the large spaces are not insulated so heating of only discreet spaces within the building is the best that can be achieved, and the administration offices are still housed within portacoms within the building.
In addition the building sits adjacent to train lines, although acoustic isolation of the auditorium appears to have addressed noise transfer issues during performances.

The biggest challenge for future use, however, is the ownership of the facility and/or costs associated with leasing. It is currently leased from a commercial property investor on a three-year revolving cycle. The current lease allows of up to five cycles, thus ensuring the theatres presence for a total of 15 years.

The departure of Court Theatre from the building provides an opportunity to consider The Shed as a replacement for the function that was performed by Repertory Theatre.

2. THE ARTS CENTRE OF CHRISTCHURCH

Location: 310 Montreal Street, Christchurch
Website: www.artscentre.org.nz

The current vision document for Arts Centre Christchurch articulates the option of developing a performance space, the size and functionality of which is not yet specified pending analysis of the demand for such a space and the business model that would underpin it.

The Arts Centre is currently in discussion with tenants in relation to a two-year arrangement to use the Gymnasium building as a venue. However, it is expected that this building will eventually be converted to a hospitality use.

Should the decision be made to re-establish a venue within the complex, then it is likely to be based around some kind of reinterpretation of the old Court Theatre space. This main theatre space provided almost 300 seats and with the heritage constraints of the environment it struggled to meet the demands of an expanding professional theatre company and its audience. Such heritage constraints will certainly remain in the future, posing a challenge to the achievement of a truly fit-for-purpose performance venue.

Nevertheless, despite the challenges, there remains the possibility that an effective community theatre space could be achieved in some form within this highly desirable location.
It should also be noted that restoration of the Great Hall is proceeding with some limited technical enhancement. However, the facility will remain essentially a Tier 3 venue, suitable for specific one-off performances such as spoken word and some music, but still reliant on significant conversion/set up to make it usable.

G. A DANCE AND PHYSICAL THEATRE 'BLACK BOX' PERFORMANCE SPACE WITH MOVEABLE STAGING AND SEATING (200-400) AND FLEXIBLE STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES

Realization of a venue of this kind will do much to move the Christchurch performing arts sector forward. Identified as a gap even before the quakes, lack of a space dedicated to contemporary, non-script based performance has impacted on the range and depth of works created in Christchurch.

There is no certainty regarding the future of the CPIT circo-arts course. Development of a future CPIT venue may therefore not be suited to this kind of performance, and current plans are for a 2020-22 construction at the earliest. There are, however, currently two potential projects that may achieve the desired outcome.

1. PERFORMANCE MOVEMENT FACILITY (MOVE)

Location: Cnr St Asaph and Antigua Street, Christchurch


Following the 2011 quakes, a grouping of dance, physical theatre and circo-arts practitioners created a vision for a purpose-built facility for class, rehearsal and performance. When planning for the Metro Sports Facility (MSF) was developed, the facility concept was incorporated as part of the broader project, titled the Performance Movement Centre, or MOVE. Delivery of the complex is scheduled for 2017.

The MSF business case will go before Cabinet in mid-2014 for approval. MOVE’s full concept included a total of six studio spaces, plus a 350/400-seat black box theatre space. There remains, however, the possibility that the full concept may be reduced in scale, or even removed all together.
Nevertheless, MOVE has the potential to cater successfully for the demands of dance/physical theatre and circo arts, with fit-for-purpose flooring and rigging capabilities. Two of the studios will be 12m high and intended to specifically cater for aerial work.

The needs of Venue (G) as outlined above will be met if MOVE’s full scope proposal is incorporated into the approved MSF business case and functional brief. It will create a facility that will be unique to New Zealand and it has the potential to position Christchurch nationally as a leading centre for this genre of performance.

2. YMCA STADIUM CONVERSION PROJECT

**Location:** Cnr Hereford Street and Rolleston Avenue

**Website:** [http://ymcachch.org.nz](http://ymcachch.org.nz)

YMCA Christchurch occupies a central CBD site in Hereford Street, opposite both The Arts Centre of Christchurch and the Botanic Gardens. Plans are currently being developed to redevelop the old basketball stadium building, which currently houses a recreational climbing wall.

The intention is to create two arts-focused spaces

- A free-to-the-public street art exhibition space of size and scope unique in the world, providing street art opportunities for local and international artists, international street art festivals and events, as well as education/workshop opportunities for young people. This will be complimented by a permanent exhibit of works by internationally acclaimed street artist Banksy which has been gifted to Christchurch City care/of the YMCA.
- A flexi-form black box theatre space. In line with the objectives of YMCA to fill a community need, the venue will be intentionally affordable for independent artists and community groups.
Initial scoping work has been funded by Canterbury Community Trust and will be progressed in the following months. The project will be funding-dependent for the capital expenditure but it is intended that ongoing operational costs will be absorbed within YMCA’s own operating budget.

With an internal height of approximately three floors there is real potential to develop a fit-for-purpose performance space suited to a range of contemporary performance including dance/physical theatre and circo-arts.

As with any existing building conversion certain elements will provide challenges that will require creative solutions to overcome. Pack-in, for example, will require the installation of lifts as the performance space will sit on the second floor of the building; load-baring restrictions may impact on circus/aerial work.

Nevertheless, there is real potential to create an ideal space for emerging talent to be showcased and for new works to be supported across a variety of genre. The co-location of street art exhibitions will further develop a specific youth-focused aesthetic. With this target demographic in mind, a capacity within the 200-seat range may prove to be most suited to the type of artist that the performance space will attract and technical restrictions will be of less significance due to the budget limitations of the clients.

**H. OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATRE / PERFORMANCE SPACE**

This remains a component of the PAP, but final design is subject to the finalization of the proposed overall PAP design.

There is also the potential for an outdoor performance space to be created as part of the Avon River Precinct design. This space may be connected to the new retail, office and hospitality development on Oxford Terrace and reach across the Avon River.
### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following table outlines the current match between planned/existing venues and the requirements as outlined in the Optimum Facilities Matrix:

**Table 3: Optimal Facility – Project Alignment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility type</th>
<th>Venue to achieve this</th>
<th>Currently Proceeding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. A large auditorium 2000+</td>
<td>Christchurch Town Hall Auditorium</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Mid-size seated auditorium for traditional/ symphonic / chamber music</td>
<td>Up to 350</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music Centre of Christchurch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,200+</td>
<td>Possible Limited Option pending acoustic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isaac Theatre Royal</td>
<td>Potential Option outside CBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Up to 1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSO Hangar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Theatre for staged productions 1200+</td>
<td>Isaac Theatre Royal</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Dedicated theatre company venue</td>
<td>New Court Theatre in PAP</td>
<td>LIKELY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Mid-size contemporary music venue seated/standing</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>NONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Community theatre venue</td>
<td>Repertory Theatre (rebuild)</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Shed</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts Centre Performance Space</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Dance/physical theatre flexible 'black box'; 200-400</td>
<td>Converted space (200+ seats)</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose – built (400 seats)</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YMCA building conversion</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metro Sports Facility (MOVE)</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. An outdoor amphitheatre</td>
<td>PAP concept</td>
<td>LIKELY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avon River Precinct concept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Particular attention must be paid to the gaps identified for Venue (E) and potential gap in (B). In addition, there is still considerable risk around the realization of (F) and (G).
1. REVIEW THE ROLE JAMES HAY THEATRE WILL PLAY AS A KEY MID-SIZED VENUE

As can be noted in Research Scope and Venue Definitions Section and again in Table 3 (above) James Hay Theatre (JHT) does not currently address an identified need. The reinstatement of Christchurch Town Hall’s ‘second space’ therefore provides a significant opportunity for a thorough reconsideration of this key venue’s role.

As already noted Council has consulted with the sector to update pre-earthquake plans for refurbishment. V-Base will be reviewing the business case and the functional requirements of the theatre in association with the design team.

The venue was initially conceived as a mid-sized 800-seat proscenium arch theatre for dramatic presentation complete with facilities for full theatrical production including proscenium arch and flytower. Wing space and back stage considerations, however, were less than ideal.

Later modifications were made to increase capacity to slightly more than 1,000 seats, which compromised the experience of a more intimate performer-audience relationship, particularly for those seated at the rear of the theatre.

Thereafter the theatre appears to have struggled to find a clear role and market - rather too large to achieve the intimacy necessary for a mid-scale dramatic experience, it remained slightly too small and inflexible to successfully deliver larger-scale musical theatre or commercial music concerts. Pre-2011 utilization data indicates utilization of 155 event days (43%) annually. Half of these were non-performing arts events.

Another factor affecting the relevance of the pre-quake JHT was the successful redevelopment of the Isaac Theatre Royal, which saw the establishment of a fit-for-purpose fully appointed proscenium arch theatre seating 1,200 seat. The fact that this theatre will reopen in an even more enhanced state in October 2014 makes a direct reinstatement of the pre-quake James Hay configuration even less relevant to the needs of the city.

As identified above, Table 3: Optimal Facility – Project Alignment clearly identifies two facilities currently lacking in the current venue provision; the mid-size auditorium for classical music (larger than that provided by MCC) and the mid-size flat-floor contemporary music venue. There is an opportunity to investigate whether these requirements can be met by a re-developed James Hay Theatre.

There appear to be two broad areas that provide opportunities for enhancement:
1. the original acoustic is not currently appropriate for acoustic music; and
2. the current raked, fixed seating does not allow for a standing event.

Current technologies may provide possible solutions. Recent refurbishment of Auckland’s Aotea Centre has demonstrated what can now be achieved with contemporary acoustic technology. The inclusion of new reflective surfaces with the installation of a Virtual Acoustic Environment system has transformed the venue’s previously sub-optimal acoustic to such a degree that both New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra are planning returns to regular presentations within the auditorium.

A similar system in JHT could make this a suitable venue for the CSO or similar acoustic music performances, sitting mid-way between MCC and Douglas Lilburn Auditorium.

Auckland’s Bruce Mason Centre, opened in 1996, provides an example of 1,000+ seated theatre that can convert to flat floor from a theatrical rake to a flat floor for the staging of standing concerts, increasing capacity to up to 1,600.

A more recent example of a fully automated conversion system was installed in the 2006 Schermerhorn Symphony Center in Nashville, USA. Here a system of motorized seating wagons transported via a lift mechanism to a storage area underneath the chamber reportedly allows a crew of five to convert the hall from raked seating to flat floor in less than two hours.

Finally, it should also be noted that an improved seating configuration could also make the venue highly suited to mid-scale dramatic performances, particularly if the seating capacity was brought more in line with the original intent of the theatre.

While solutions are available, however, it will require further investigation to determine what is possible in JHT in light of the physical and financial limits of the project.

2. AN ACTIVE RE-ENGAGEMENT WITH TWO OF THE KEY TENANTS OF THE PERFORMING ARTS PRECINCT, COURT THEATRE AND CHRISTCHURCH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

It is now clear that the original PAP concept to include a purpose-built, mid-sized concert hall will not proceed. The needs of CSO therefore need to be considered in light of the range of other venues that will be available in the central city.

Douglas Lilburn Auditorium in the Town Hall can clearly provide for the large scale events. Music Centre of Christchurch, however, while highly appropriate for small scale concerts, will not provide a suitable venue for any of the CSO’s current programming.
It appears that Isaac Theatre Royal may have potential to address some of the needs of certain kinds of concert performance (though not all) requiring 1,200 seats. New staging facilities appear likely to be provide adequate stage space. However, the acoustic remains uncertain.

The James Hay Theatre therefore needs careful consideration in regards to the role it could play as a mid-scale acoustic music venue. Issues of the acoustic capability and the optimal audience capacity, as noted above, need to be addressed with a specific understanding of the outcome it seeks to achieve. Consultation with CSO in the development of both Town Hall venues, therefore, will need to be conducted to ensure the PAP concept remains relevant for this organization.

Securing the place of Court Theatre as an anchor tenant is key to ensuring PAP has an immediate critical mass of audience from day one. In addition, the return of the company to central Christchurch will release a now established venue, The Shed, for wider community use.

Confirmation of financial arrangements, particularly in relation to rental charges and tenure agreements appear to be delaying any clear timetable with Court Theatre. Given the obvious success of the company’s current business at The Shed, however, the company is under no immediate pressure to move. This poses a significant risk to the viability of PAP and needs to be addressed.

In addition, securing a future for The Shed as a community venue will require further investigation with the commercial owners. It is unlikely that a single community/independent company will have the sole resources to take on the lease alone, so the role of government agencies in negotiating any deal and developing a comprehensive business plan will be essential.

3. ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE PROGRESS OF BOTH BLACK BOX VENUES

Both MOVE and the YMCA project have the potential to contribute strongly to the city’s venue infrastructure for contemporary performance. MOVE has the potential to fully deliver on the requirements as set down as Venue (G). However, this is only if the approved construction includes a purpose-built performance space.

The YMCA project has its own momentum and has already engaged the interest of potential funders and sponsors. The challenges of working within an existing building will mean that it will be a significant challenge to create a performance space that is truly ‘state of the art’ without significant compromise. If the requirements of MOVE are not fully incorporated into MSF then the YMCA project has the potential to deliver some of the sectors needs but may operate most successfully as a development/emerging artist space.

There remains considerable uncertainty for both venues. Should neither progress, a critical venue for contemporary performance will be lacking from the overall venue mix. It should be noted that both venues sit within organizations that are outside a traditional arts environment. Both organizations’ primary focus is not to simply manage arts venues for performance outcomes and therefore appropriate support from venue specialists will be essential.
Active encouragement in both projects will serve to highlight the significance that these venues will play for the Christchurch contemporary arts sector, particularly in light of the fact that these gaps were identified in the venue infrastructure before the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes.

4. ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS MODELS TO ENSURE DESIRED OUTCOMES ARE MET

As noted, assessment of how each of the venues will be operated falls outside the scope of this report. However, the construction of a facility can only fulfill the needs indentified in the Optimum Facility Matrix if it is supported by an appropriate – and sustainable - business model.

Accordingly, it is recommended that comprehensive analysis of the operating models for any proposed venues is undertaken before capital work is begun.

Purely commercial models for many of the key facilities are unlikely to yield the desired outcomes in relation to levels of utilization and art form that are presented. For any publically-funded venues, models that provide both clear social as well as commercial returns on investment will return greater value to the city.

5. CONTINUE TO RECOGNISE THE BENEFITS THAT ACCRUE FROM THE CREATION OF CLUSTERS OF FACILITIES AND ENSURE THAT COMPLEMENTARY PRIVATE INVESTMENT IS ENCOURAGED

As noted, this report does not consider the optimal location for the key venues, only whether they are, or will be, available.

Nevertheless, the presence of facilities can bring broader artistic, social and economic benefits to their immediate location. A return of the Court Theatre to the CBD, for example, will return 150,000 annual audience members helping to support commercial development and social activation of inner city spaces, especially during the evenings.

It is also important to consider the effect of multiple facilities in close relationship to one another. These performance clusters or hubs can serve to magnify the benefits of these facilities, creating a critical mass of energy and activity. The inclusion of the PAP in the CCRP acknowledges this key role that performing arts can play in revitalizing a CBD.

Fully activated ‘precincts’ cannot be created by facilities alone and are typically achieved alongside private commercial operators who deliver pre- and post-show activation in the form of bars, cafes, restaurants and retail outlets. It is important to ensure complementary planning and development occurs between public and private investors in order to successfully integrate performance venues into the city rebuild.