

Concert Hall “at rest” policy – Draft

Background:

In its response to the Heritage Council submission on SSD8663 (4 July 2019), the SOH has committed to develop an “At Rest” policy for the Concert Hall. The “at rest” policy will be included in the future revision of the Conservation Management Plan.

Policies in the CMP4 are supported by narrative which provides context to the policy, and the rationale for including the policy in the CMP4. The SOH provides the following draft context and policy regarding the management of the Concert Hall in an “At Rest” configuration.

Note that with the next revision of the CMP, the main discussion / policy context section will be revised to reflect the acoustic, functional and accessibility changes presently proposed. Therefore the discussion and policy text proposed below will require review at the time of drafting this next CMP revision to ensure consistency and clarity.

Policy Context:

As noted above, [*3rd and 4th para page 122 of CMP 4th edition*] Hall’s design for the Concert Hall interior prioritised acoustic performance over amplified and this could be considered as the ‘at rest’ character and configuration of the space. However as this particular venue is very heavily booked and used for a wide variety of performance types, including amplified and contemporary performance as well as school speech days, there is rarely a time when it is not in preparation for the next performance. Each setup is agreed with the venue user to support their artistic and acoustic requirements, and once it is “set”, the hirer requires that it remains through rehearsals until all performances are completed. This ensures performance consistency, efficient operations as well as the safety of all performers and crew. Performances can be scheduled over a number of days or even multiple weeks.

Apart from patrons attending performances who will experience the venue in acoustic or amplified modes, the only other members of the public visiting the Concert Hall will be on tours. Hosting tour groups within any of the venues is contingent on the agreement of the venue hirer, noting that activities to support the performance (e.g. instrument tuning, sound-checks and rehearsals) will always take precedence and may temporarily preclude public access. At other times, tour groups may observe the venue being set up or striking an amplified or acoustic event, or undergoing maintenance. While this is a part of the practical nature of a highly utilised venue, it provides an opportunity for visitors to experience the venue ‘in use’ and understand the Opera House’s importance as a working performing arts centre.

Currently, the interpretation of the Concert Hall on these tours highlights the role of Peter Hall in completing the Opera House and identifies significant design elements by him in the venue. The tour leader focuses on particular elements depending on what activities are occurring in the venue, for example when the venue is in amplified mode and the crown and organ may not be visible, the tour leader will highlight the folded timber ceiling, brush box panels and theatre seats as elements by Peter Hall.

Policy “At-rest mode” – Concert Hall

On occasions when it is operationally and technically feasible and where the Concert Hall is not required for performance, rehearsals, technical or maintenance activity, preset for rehearsals or performances, and / or being reset for a different performance, the venue will be presented in an “at-rest mode” as follows:

- *over-stage acoustic reflectors deployed for acoustic concert performance;*
- *side wall reflectors withdrawn;*
- *acoustic drapes and curtains withdrawn;*
- *unused suspension systems withdrawn;*
- *minimal technical overlay deployed.*

At these times visibility to the defining elements of Peter Hall’s design as described in Policy 8.3, should be prioritised.

DRAFT
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