

2.4.1. Front of House

The Capitol Theatre retains original elements of the atmospheric theatre developed in 1927-1928 by John Eberson and Henry White. Internally, the theatre retains its original 1920s foyer, gallery and auditorium which all form part of the Front of House spaces. Whilst these elements remain, they have undergone some change throughout the twentieth century, particularly during the early 1990s restoration work which reconstructed many missing elements of the 1920s theatre.

Throughout the original 1920s interior, the atmospheric theatre features ceilings of smooth plaster painted with electric blue curving from behind side walls and embellished with lighting representing stars in the sky. All elements under the blue sky present as if they were external architectural features. Side walls are penetrated by gates, arches, temples, balconies and gables. The stylistic influence of each of the decorative features within the Capitol Theatre draws from disparate styles including Baroque, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, Spanish Mission and Gothic, to name a few. However, although a mix of different styles have been adapted, the overarching design of the interiors of the Capitol Theatre represents a Venetian style designed to represent a public square in an old Italian town.³

The remaining Front of House spaces are located in a portion of the former Manning Building along the east side of the building. These were constructed during the 1990s as part of the wider redevelopment of the site which included the Manning Building, the Palace Hotel and northern portion of Parker Street.

2.4.1.1. Original Foyers

The original foyers of the Capitol Theatre are located in the north-west portion of the building at ground and first floor. Created as part of the 1920s atmospheric theatre and restored during the 1990s, the foyers reflect the original design and detailing of the atmospheric theatre. Access to the spaces are gained via Campbell Street by a set of eight reconstructed double leaf timber doors which open onto the ground floor foyer. Twisted columns and candelabra style lighting flank the doors and an elaborate polychrome entablature surmounts the doors. The foyer is split into two levels, one at ground floor, which leads into the original gallery, and the second at first floor, which leads into the dress circle of the auditorium. At ground floor, the floors are laid with mottled cream and brown terracotta floor tiles laid in a checkerboard pattern, with individual tiles with heraldic motifs. The walls are finished with variegated stucco and an electric blue coved ceiling is featured overhead.

Two winding marble staircases connect the ground floor to the first floor on either side of the foyer. The balustrades are constructed on timber and feature moulded metal friezes. Light posts flank the rising stairs and replica busts are featured at the staircase landings. The balustrade and lighting continues along the balcony of the dress circle foyer at first floor. Three sets of reconstructed double leaf timber doors provide access through to the gallery at ground floor. Surmounting each doorway are highly detailed arches, columns, entablature and cornice all finished in a polychromatic colour scheme. The north wall of the double height space features replica bas-reliefs and heraldic style banners.

At the dress circle foyer, the floors are laid with replica carpet with a stone flagging pattern. The walls too are variegated stucco, with inserts of niches and archways featuring replica statuary. Banners, light fittings, shields, and mirrors also decorate the walls. Below the coved ceiling is an elaborate polychromatic cornice with antefixes concealing the junction of the ceiling with the walls. Strategic lighting illuminates the ceiling from behind the cornice, giving the effect of a night sky. At either end of the dress circle foyer are the entrances to the auditorium. Each entrance is detailed with columns, decorative brackets, and a domed ceiling with polychromatic cornice and antefixes.

Within the dress circle foyer is the Gargoyle Bar located in the centre of the south wall. Delineated by a set of three reversed ogee style arches, the bar draws its name by the series of replica gargoyles which line the border of the ceiling. A small coved ceiling, painted blue, features in the centre, bordered by a small cornice with antefixes. The coved ceiling is illuminated from behind the antefixes. Replica bas-reliefs feature on the east and west walls of the space, and on the south wall is a contemporary bar area. Male and female bathrooms are located either side of the Gargoyle Bar. The bathrooms contain a mix of original, reconstructed and contemporary fabric. The anterooms to each of the bathrooms continue the reconstructed carpet from the foyer, with variegated stucco walls with mouldings, and tray ceilings. Some portions of the original ceilings remain in the air lock and cubicle spaces, however the remainder of the fixture and fittings are contemporary.

³ Refer to Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 for further description of the original design intent of the Capitol Theatre.



Figure 38 – Ground floor foyer



Figure 39 – Ground floor foyer viewed from dress circle foyer



Figure 40 – Floor tiles in original foyer

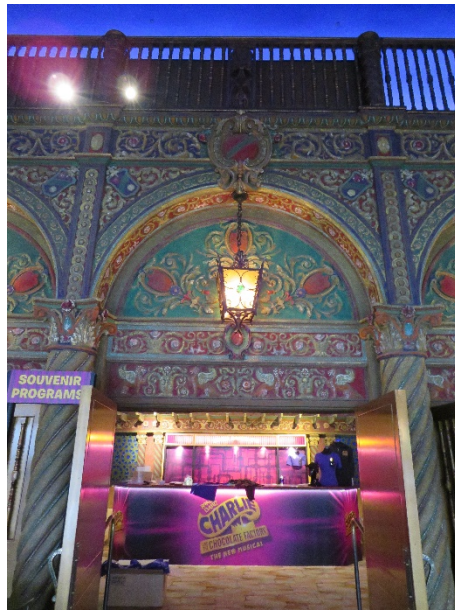


Figure 41 – Detail of archways of doors through to gallery



Figure 42 – Marble stairs in original foyer



Figure 43 – Detail of staircase balustrade



Figure 44 – Dress circle foyer looking east



Figure 45 – Dress circle foyer



Figure 46 – Dress circle foyer looking west



Figure 47 – Dress circle foyer



Figure 48 – Dress circle foyer

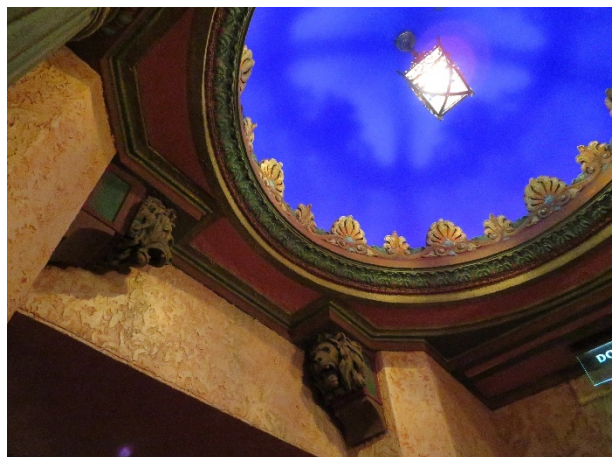


Figure 49 – Dress circle foyer



Figure 50 – Gargoyle Bar



Figure 51 – Gargoyle Bar



Figure 52 – Gargoyle Bar



Figure 53 – Gargoyle Bar back of house area



Figure 54 – Male bathroom in dress circle foyer



Figure 55 – Male bathroom in dress circle foyer



Figure 56 – Female bathroom in dress circle foyer



Figure 57 – Female bathroom in dress circle foyer

2.4.1.2. Original Stalls Gallery

The original stalls gallery continues the materiality of the original foyers. The stalls gallery is accessed via the set of three reconstructed timber double leaf doors which lead from the foyer. Each door opening is flanked by decorative pilasters and surmounted with an elaborate entablature in polychromatic paint finish. The stalls gallery curves from east to west, conforming with the shape of the rear of the auditorium. The space features the same carpet used in the dress circle foyer and the same variegated stuccoed wall. A series of columns divide the north portion of the space from the south. The north portion of the ceiling has a rough plaster finish with egg and dart cornices, while the south portion of the ceiling is divided into sections by an elaborate entablature with antefixes, and a smooth plaster ceiling painted electric blue, bordered by a smaller cornice. Along the south wall of the stalls gallery are two contemporary bars and a merchandise desk. To the rear of the merchandise desk is the outer wall of the technical room (located within the stalls of the auditorium) which is fashioned as the exterior of a trellised pergola. The east and west walls of the stalls gallery feature niches and arches with urn shaped lights. Along the south wall are doors which lead to the stalls of the auditorium, to the east through to the new box office and foyer and to the west to the fire exit onto Campbell Street. In the north-east corner of the stalls gallery are a pair of reconstructed double leaf doors which lead down a set of stairs to some female bathrooms. The walls of the stairway down to the bathrooms feature the same variegated stucco finish, and mouldings similar to the other bathrooms anterooms in the first floor foyer.



Figure 58 – Doors from foyer to gallery



Figure 59 – Stalls gallery



Figure 60 – Stalls gallery



Figure 61 – Stalls gallery



Figure 62 – Stalls gallery



Figure 63 – Stalls gallery



Figure 64 – Stalls gallery



Figure 65 – Detail of column and cornicing in gallery



Figure 66 – Female bathroom, off gallery



Figure 67 – Detail of column and cornicing in gallery

2.4.1.3. Auditorium

The Auditorium is split over two floors, the stalls and dress circle. It is the most elaborate space of the original atmospheric theatre. Statuary adorns the alcoves, niches, terraces and small temples that line the east and west walls of the auditorium. White pigeons rest on a gazebo and cypress trees and vines adorn the many arches, niches and alcoves. A single peacock sits atop an arch and are scattered throughout the proscenium arch moulding. A pergola spans across the rear of the dress circle, adorned with vines, while the space is drawn together by the electric blue coved ceiling which spans across the auditorium, accented by the many small lights reminiscent of the night sky. Several suspended acoustic panels adorn the ceiling and three long narrow panels are cut into the ceiling for theatre lighting.

The stone flagging style carpet is used throughout the seating areas of the auditorium. While the seats within the auditorium were installed during the 1990s works, they are designed to fit with the style of the theatre, and are upholstered in a light pink velvet fabric. The first few rows of seating closest to the stage are set on panels which can be removed and replaced as needed for the expansion or contraction of the orchestra pit. The ceiling of the stalls (the underside of the dress circle) features coffered ceiling, with decorative friezes. At the dress circle, the seating is divided into several tiers, with balustrades matching the balustrades of the foyer dividing the seating areas. Some contemporary balustrades are also used in the east and west side of the dress circle. A pair of balconies are attached to the dress circle at the its lower portion of its east and west sides. While these were installed during the 1990s reconstruction works, they match the aesthetic of the rest of the atmospheric theatre. Fire exits from the stalls and dress circle are located in the corner of each of the levels.

The focal point of the auditorium is the original proscenium arch which frames the stage with statuary, mouldings, lamps, artificial vines and doves and a series of moulded peacocks. The original spandrels of the arch were removed and reconstructed as part of the 1990s works.



Figure 68 – West wall of stalls

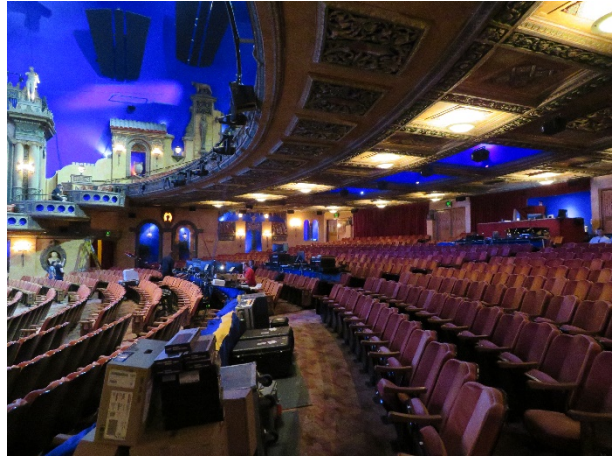


Figure 69 – West wall of stalls

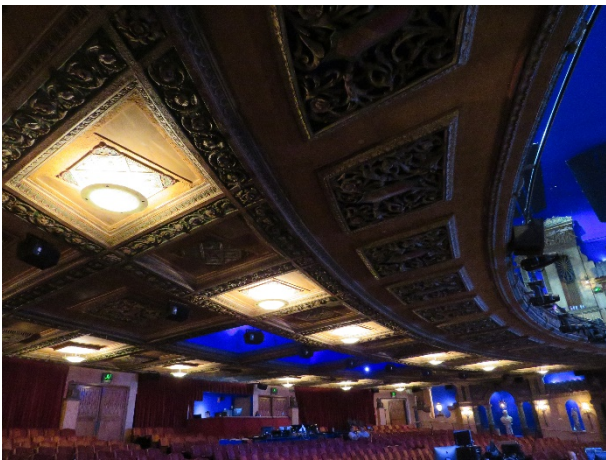


Figure 70 – Ceiling under dressing circle



Figure 71 – North wall of auditorium stalls

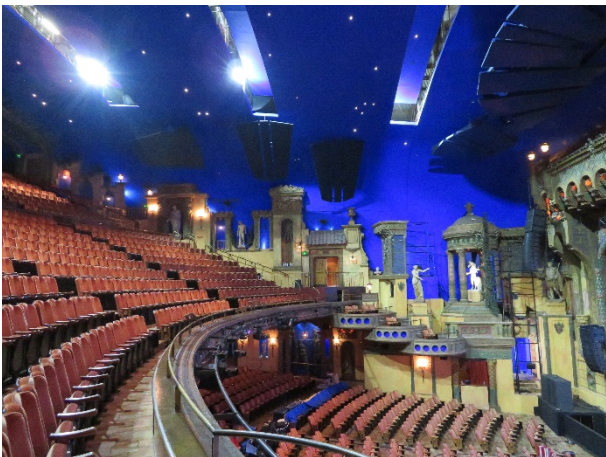


Figure 72 – East wall of dress circle

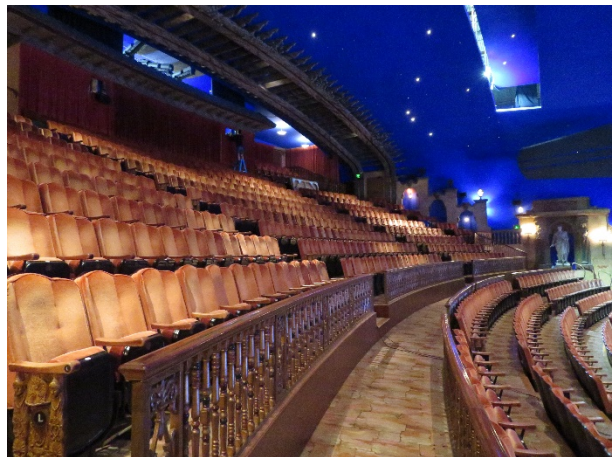


Figure 73 – Dress Circle, rear seating



Figure 74 – North wall of dress circle



Figure 75 – North-west section of dress circle



Figure 76 – North wall of dress circle



Figure 77 – East wall of dress circle



Figure 78 – View to rear of dress circle



Figure 79 – Three tiers of balconies at dress circle



Figure 80 – Proscenium arch

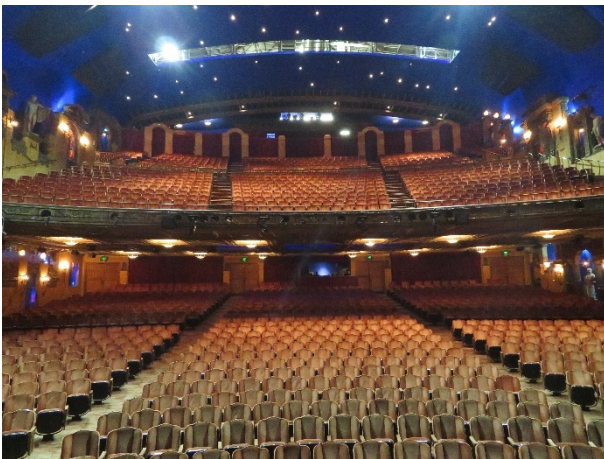


Figure 81 – View from the stage looking toward the seating



Figure 82 – View from front of stalls into the orchestra pit.

2.4.1.4. New Foyer and Gallery

The foyer and gallery located on the east side of the building at ground and first floor are within the former Manning Building. Public access to the foyer and gallery is via Campbell Street, which leads directly into the box office area on the ground floor. The box office area has been recently redesigned and features charcoal marble floor tiles, timber veneer wall cladding, dropped plaster ceilings with suspended, can and down lighting.

The box office area flows through to the 1990s stalls foyer, a long narrow space featuring blue carpet, timber veneer wall cladding, plasterboard ceilings and down lighting. On the east side of the space is a bar area. To the south is female and male toilet toilets. On the east wall is a contemporary grand staircase with marble treads and rises, and a metal and timber balustrade. A sweeping curved opening is cut into the ceiling of the stalls foyer and leads through to the 1990s dress circle gallery above.

The dress circle gallery continues the materiality of the stall gallery below, with blue carpet and timber veneer wall cladding with metal accents. The dress circle gallery is a double height space and features two arched openings double hung timber-framed windows along the north wall, looking out to Campbell Street. The ceiling draws cues from the atmospheric theatre of the original foyer, gallery and auditorium. The ceiling is painted in the same colour blue, representing the night sky. However, instead of lights being set into the ceiling, a curved mesh metal ceiling with small lights scattered behind, representing the night sky. Large curved metal light fittings also project from the east and west walls, curving up toward the ceiling. Another curved bar is located on the east wall. Further public toilets are located in the south portion of the space. The box office, stalls foyer and dress circle gallery are linked to the original foyer, gallery and auditorium via four doorways located along the east wall.

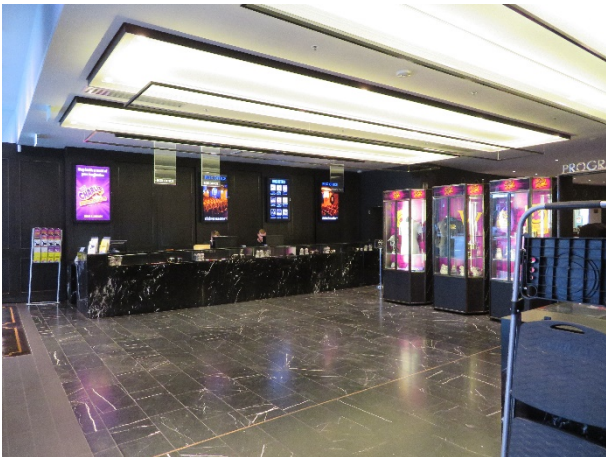


Figure 83 – Box office



Figure 84 – Box office



Figure 85 – Box office



Figure 86 – Box office and new foyer area



Figure 87 – Doorway from box office through to the original stall gallery



Figure 88 – New foyer, ground floor



Figure 89 – New foyer, ground floor



Figure 90 – New foyer bar area, ground floor

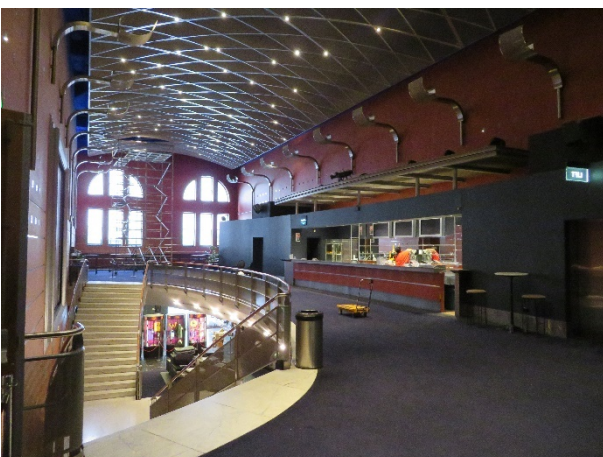


Figure 91 – New gallery, first floor



Figure 92 – New gallery, first floor



Figure 93 – New gallery and staircase



Figure 94 – New gallery



Figure 95 – Bar in new gallery

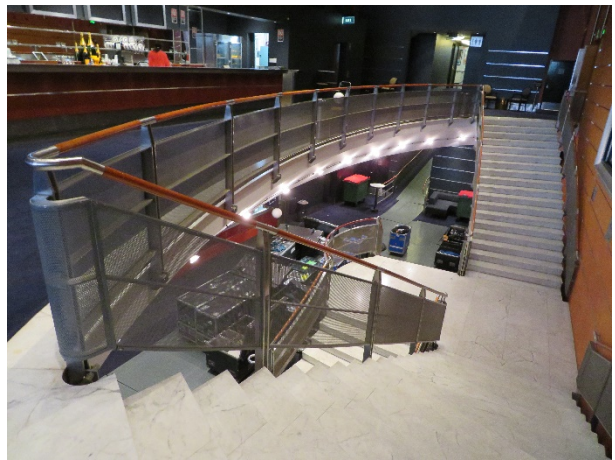


Figure 96 – Stairs in new gallery



Figure 97 – Door from new Gallery to auditorium



Figure 98 – Door from new gallery through to the original dress circle gallery

2.4.2. Back of House

The Back of House spaces of the Capitol Theatre are located within the east and south portions of the building from the sub-stage to third floor. The Back of House areas include spaces for performers, technicians and staff. The spaces include the stage, fly tower, orchestra pit, change rooms, green room, rehearsal spaces, offices, workrooms, storerooms, and utilities. All the Back of House spaces were constructed during the 1990s redevelopment of the site and do not contain any internal materials and finishes, apart from some structural elements, of earlier iterations of the building.

The stage, fly tower and orchestra pit are located within the south-west portion of the building, with the remaining spaces of the Back of House being located in the south-east portion.

2.4.2.1. Stage, Fly Tower, Orchestra Pit, Workshops and Catwalks

The existing fly tower, which contains the stage, orchestra pit and workshops, among other smaller rooms, was constructed during the 1990s. The new fly tower directly connects with the original south wall of the auditorium. The exposed brickwork of this wall can be seen from within the fly tower at the rear of the proscenium wall. The walls of the remaining fly tower are constructed of concrete blockwork and are painted. The Capitol Theatre utilises a counterweight system that was installed during the 1990s works. Fly floors and cross overs are accessed via the backstage foyers at the second and third floors.

The stage deck is constructed of timber joists with supported on steel beams within the substage area and is overlaid with timber boards and sheeting and a theatre floor surfacing. The stage floor has been modified over times to accommodate different productions, for installations such as trap doors. Directly in front of the apron of the stage is the orchestra pit which is accessed via the sub-stage level. The size of the orchestra pit can be modified to three different sizes, depending on the size of orchestra required for a performance. This is achieved through the temporary removal of seating within the first few rows of the stalls seating and the erection of temporary partition walls.

Directly below the stage is the sub-stage areas which include technical workshops and trap room. These areas are constructed from the same concrete blocks as the other 1990s portions of the building and have concrete slab floors. A steel mezzanine floor is built into the sub-stage area for storage.

Catwalks over the auditorium ceiling are accessed via the third floor fly floors. The catwalks extend over the auditorium ceiling to allow access to the lighting bridges and through to the follow spot booth at the rear of the auditorium. The earlier structure of the 1920s auditorium ceiling is still in place and was modified during the 1990s works. The earlier roof structure over the auditorium ceiling has been retained under the new roof structure, and is reinforced with contemporary materials. At the rear of the dress circle seating area is the follow spot booth.

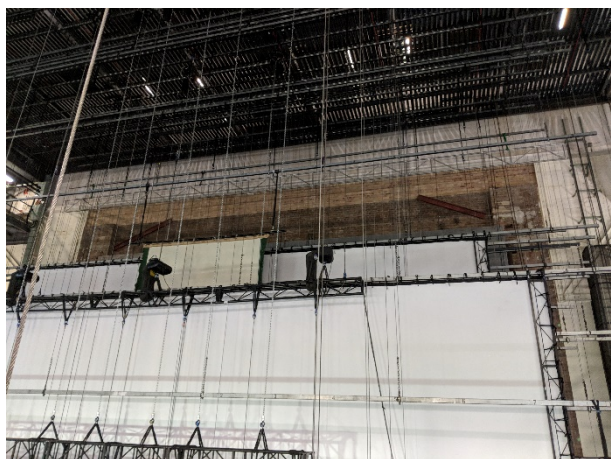


Figure 99 – South wall of auditorium within the fly loft

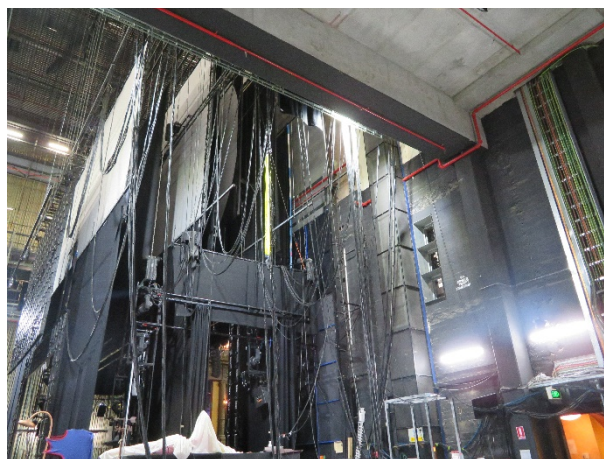


Figure 100 – Opposite prompt side stage



Figure 101 – Fly loft, looking west

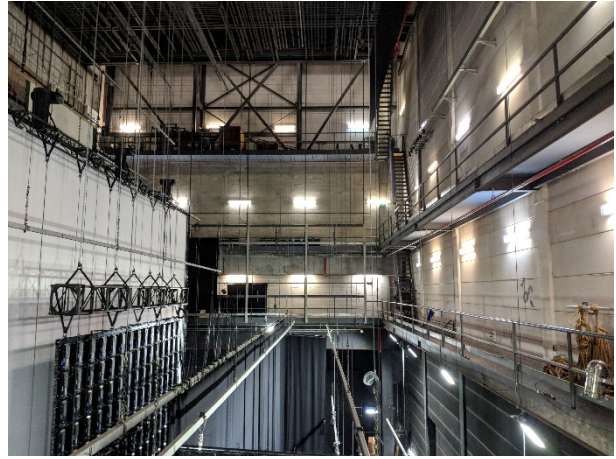


Figure 102 – Fly loft, looking east

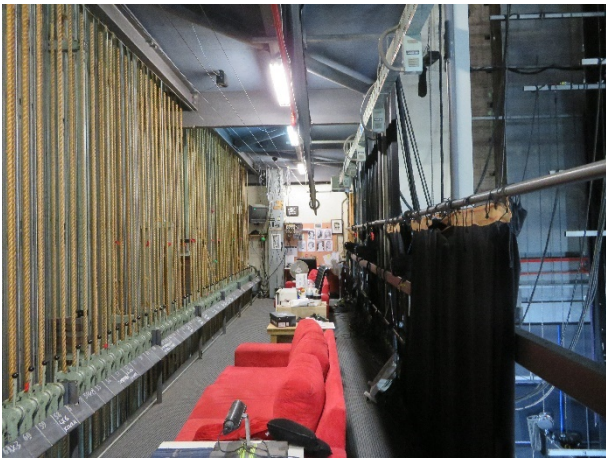


Figure 103 – Catwalk on west wall of fly tower



Figure 104 – Stage viewed from west side of stalls



Figure 105 – Orchestra pit, looking west

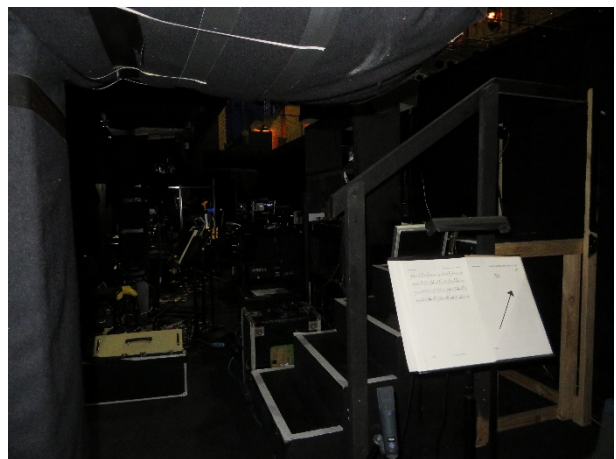


Figure 106 – Orchestra pit, looking east



Figure 107 – Technical workshops, sub-stage level

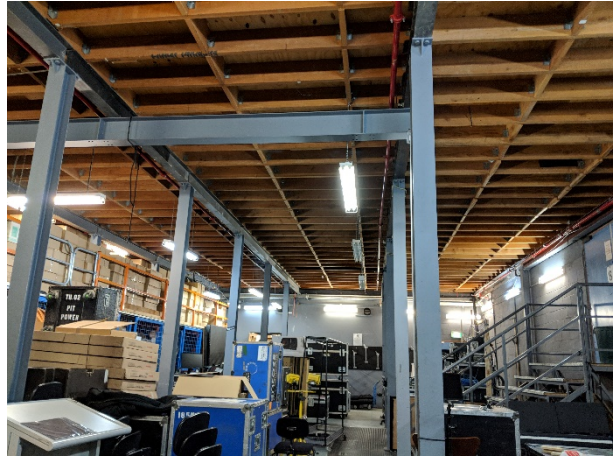


Figure 108 – Technical workshops, sub-stage level, directly underneath the stage



Figure 109 – View from within roof space of auditorium, with proscenium wall visible

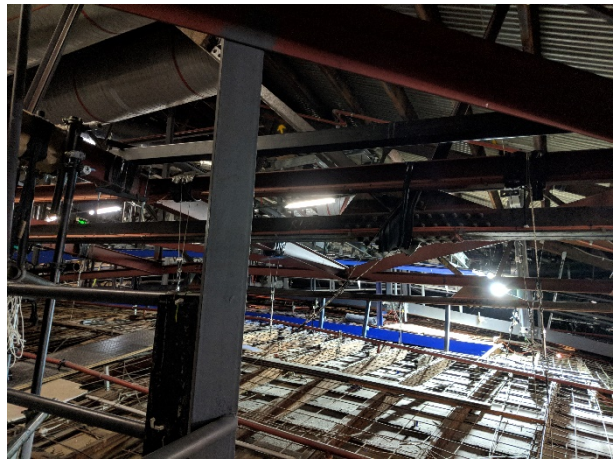


Figure 110 – View from within roof space of auditorium



Figure 111 – Mezzanine of follow spot booth



Figure 112 – View from follow spot booth to rear of dress circle seating

2.4.2.2. Foyers and Lobbies

Each level in the Back of House Area is centred around the service core with foyers and lobbies adjoining. The majority of each of the foyers and lobbies from the sub-stage to third floor are distinguished by a checkerboard pattern of orange and green vinyl tiles. The walls of these spaces are primarily feature painted concrete block construction, with services, either exposed or concealed behind suspended plasterboard ceilings. Where the concrete structure of the ceiling is exposed, it is painted either the same shade of blue as featured in the original foyer, gallery and auditorium or a cream colour. At the sub-stage floor, the foyer runs east to west underneath the stalls level and through to the west side of the building. Within this corridor is the former seal tank.



Figure 113 – Stage door foyer, ground floor



Figure 114 – Service lobby, ground floor



Figure 115 – Lobby, third floor



Figure 116 – Lobby, second floor



Figure 117 – Lobby, first floor



Figure 118 – Lobby, first floor



Figure 119 – Lobby, stage floor



Figure 120 – Lobby, first floor



Figure 121 – Lobby, stage floor

2.4.2.3. Dressing Rooms, Change Rooms and Bathrooms

Dressing rooms and change rooms are located across the sub-stage, stage, first and second floors. The dressing rooms and change rooms vary in size across each of the floors, and each are adjoined by bathrooms with toilet, showers and basins. The floors of the dressing rooms are mostly covered with blue carpet, featuring painted concrete block walls, or plasterboard stud walls, and ceilings with exposed services and suspended plasterboard ceiling, or solid plasterboard ceilings. The same blue is used for the sky in the original gallery, foyer and auditorium is used on exposed concrete ceilings and some services, such as air-conditioning ducts. The fixtures and fittings within the dressing rooms, change rooms and bathrooms date from the 1990s to the present. At the sub-stage floor, the seal tank from Wirths Hippodrome has been adaptively reused for orchestra room, change rooms and bathrooms. The original walls remain, however have been refinished as part of the reconstruction works and divided into smaller spaces by painted concrete block walls.



Figure 122 – Dressing Room L1-27, first floor



Figure 123 – Dressing Room LS-04, stage floor



Figure 124 – Orchestra Room, sub-stage floor



Figure 125 – Ceiling in kitchenette with remnants of pressed metal.



Figure 126 – Bathrooms off Female Chorus Change Room SS-16, sub-stage floor



Figure 127 – Female Chorus Change Room SS-16, sub-stage floor.



Figure 128 – Ushers change room, in north portion of second floor.

2.4.2.4. Greenroom, Rehearsal Rooms, Wardrobe Workshop and Offices

The greenroom, rehearsal rooms and offices are located on the first, second and third floors. The two rehearsal rooms are located on the third floor. The largest of the two rehearsal rooms feature timber floating floor boards, painted concrete block walls (concealed by black curtains) and dropped plaster board ceilings with suspended acoustic tiles. The rehearsal room leads onto an outdoor terrace, which has views down Hay Street and to Belmore Park. The small rehearsal room features vinyl floors, painted concrete block walls and suspended acoustic tile ceilings.

At the second floor is the greenroom, wardrobe workshop and theatre management offices. The greenroom extends around a portion of the south elevation of the Manning Building. This portion of the elevation is exposed on the north wall of the greenroom. The remainder of the space has concrete floors with blue carpet floor covering, painted concrete block walls and a suspended plasterboard ceiling. The room has four small Juliet balconies which extend out to Hay Street and above the ground floor stage entrance. A kitchen is located in the north portion of the room. The wardrobe workshop is located directly next to the greenroom and features vinyl floors, painted brickwork and concrete blockwork walls and suspended plasterboard ceilings. The wardrobe workshop includes a wig storeroom and wardrobe office.

The theatre management offices are located on the same floor. The same blue carpet runs through this space and is divided by glazed and solid partition walls with suspended plasterboard ceilings. An office for the front of house manager is located on the first floor and the Capitol Suite, which is occasionally used for functions. A VIP room is located at stage level, styled the same as the new foyer and gallery.



Figure 129 – Rehearsal room, third floor

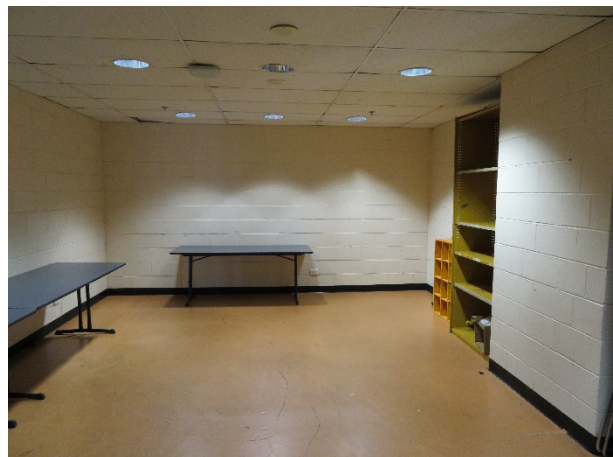


Figure 130 – Small rehearsal room, third floor



Figure 131 – Terrace off the rehearsal room, third floor, looking west



Figure 132 – Terrace off the rehearsal room, third floor, looking south-east



Figure 133 – Greenroom, second floor



Figure 134 – Greenroom, second floor



Figure 135 – Wardrobe workshop, second floor



Figure 136 – Wardrobe storeroom, second floor



Figure 137 – Theatre management offices, second floor



Figure 138 – Theatre management offices, second floor



Figure 139 – Capitol Suite, second floor



Figure 140 – VIP room, stage level

2.4.3. Service Areas

The service areas of the Capitol Theatre consists of the lift cores, plant rooms, mechanical and hydraulic cupboards and ductwork. Two passenger lifts are located within the theatre, the first in the Front of House area and a second, goods lift located within the Back of House area. The fire stairs for the Back of House is located directly to the south of the lift. The main plant room for the theatre is located on the third floor directly above the new dress circle gallery. Access to the plant room was not provided.



Figure 141 – Goods lift in Back of House area.

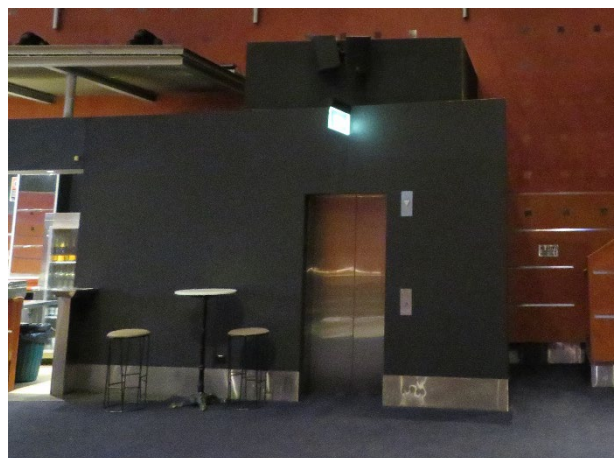


Figure 142 – Lift in Front of House area.