



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1. AESTHETIC VALUE*

Perth Concert Hall is a fine example of Late Twentieth-Century Stripped Classical style because of its monumental scale, symmetrical composition, strong horizontal roof element and peristyle like colonnade. These attributes recall the formality and monumentalism of classical architecture and reinforce a sense of occasion appropriate for a modern, civic building. (Criterion 1.1)

Perth Concert Hall illustrates an aesthetic achievement through the attractive qualities of the principal building material. The off-form concrete provides a textural quality to the overall form, and the warm sandy hues reflect the local limestone. The resolution to paint the interior of the auditorium black was a bold, and ultimately successful, decision. (Criterion 1.2)

Perth Concert Hall is a landmark on St George's Terrace. The monumentality and siting of the building allows the place to achieve a civic focus through the extensive forecourt plaza and set-back from St George's Terrace and the terraced platforms overlooking the river foreshore to the south. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Perth Concert Hall has provided Perth and Western Australia with a performance venue of international standard since 1973, allowing the State to host events it could not otherwise have experienced. (Criterion 2.1)

Perth Concert Hall is closely associated with architects Jeffrey Howlett and Don Bailey, who designed the place after winning the original design competition for a Town Hall and auditorium in 1961. (Criterion 2.3)

The place is also associated with architect and acoustician, Dr Harold Marshall, who was responsible for overseeing the acoustic qualities of the auditorium. (Criterion 2.3)

Perth Concert Hall was awarded a Concrete Institute of Australia Excellence in Concrete Award for its innovative use of off-form concrete. (Criterion 2.4)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

Perth Concert Hall demonstrates an achievement in construction technology as demonstrated by having won the Concrete Institute of Australia's Honorable Mention for Excellence in Concrete Structures. (Criterion 3.3)

Perth Concert Hall demonstrates a technical achievement in the fine acoustic qualities of the auditorium, as recognised and appreciated by performers and patrons. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Perth Concert Hall is highly valued for its social and cultural associations, being the main Perth venue for musical and other performance of international standard as well as a venue for school and university graduations, balls and civic occasions. (Criterion 4.1)

Since *Perth Concert Hall* opened in 1973, it has been the principal performing venue for the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. (Criterion 4.1)

Perth Concert Hall contributes significantly to the wider community's sense of place in its prominent position on St George's Terrace. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1 RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Perth Concert Hall is representative of the Late Twentieth-Century Stripped Classical style. Recognition of the civic stature of the place has been expressed through the principles of classical architecture, adapted to the era of construction. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Perth Concert Hall is in good condition, displaying normal wear and tear, twenty-five years after completion of construction. The combination of heavy public use and high civic stature demands an appropriate standard of presentation and maintenance.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Perth Concert Hall has a high degree of integrity, as it continues in its original function.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Perth Concert Hall has a high degree of authenticity. Whilst there have been some modifications to the function room, bar, cafe and administrative offices, and replacement of material through normal wear and tear, the building form and fabric are largely original.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Katrina Chisholm, Graduate Architect. Additional information has been compiled by Jacqui Sherriff, HCWA staff.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Perth Concert Hall was constructed in 1973, in Late Twentieth-Century Stripped Classical style.¹ It was built by Sabemo (WA) Pty Ltd to a design by architects Howlett & Bailey. The place has been in continuous use as a centre for musical performance, and for other events such as school and university graduation ceremonies, business conventions and civic functions.

In 1961, architects Jeffrey Howlett and Don Bailey won a competition to design a new Town Hall for Perth. Their design consisted of two buildings, one containing administrative offices and the other, oval in shape, comprising the 'town hall' or auditorium. The administrative offices, named *Council House*, were built; however financial constraints and doubts regarding the auditorium's acoustic properties meant that the auditorium building was not constructed at the time.

In 1966, the need for a dedicated concert venue in Perth became critical when Lord Mayor, Sir Thomas Wardle, sold his Capitol Theatre to the City of Perth to make way for a car park. Located in a central position at the river end of William Street, the Capitol could seat over 2,200 patrons and had been Perth's major concert venue since it was built in 1929.² Although it had not been designed for use as a concert and opera venue and its acoustics were less than perfect, the Capitol was well patronised. The Capitol was home to the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO), which had grown out of the ABC (Perth) Orchestra when the State Government took over the subsidising of it in 1949.

With the sale of the Capitol Theatre, the WASO was without a venue for its 1967 season. The WASO Subscribers Committee circulated a petition calling for a new permanent home for WASO in late 1966, collecting over 1,500 signatures in nine days.³ Following inquiries from the ABC, the University of Western Australia offered Winthrop Hall as a venue for WASO performances. Although it was said that the acoustics were better at this venue than at the Capitol⁴, audience numbers dropped as Winthrop Hall was not able to seat the same capacity. Concern was expressed over the future of the ABC youth concerts, which had a subscription list of 900 and it was lamented in the press that Perth was the only capital city in Australia without 'a hall in which symphonic music could be heard'.⁵

It was decided that a new concert hall was required to fill in the gap in the accommodation of the performing arts in Perth.⁶ The 1961 town hall design was reconsidered and found to have several short-comings: the oval shape was considered to have poor acoustic properties, the site behind Council House was too cramped, parking would be a problem, and more area would be lost from Stirling Gardens. Another design and another site was needed, but Perth City Councillors could not agree on their requirements, with some councillors pushing for an auditorium and others wanting a combined

1 Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989, pp. 228-231.

2 The earliest musical programme recorded at the Capitol was a concert on 4 August 1935, and the last performance was by the London Symphony Orchestra on 12 March 1966.

3 *The West Australian*, 13 December 1966, p. 8.

4 *Music in Western Australia*, Review No. 3, 1969, pp. 24-25.

5 *The West Australian*, 7 December 1966, p. 4.

6 A new cultural centre, comprising library, museum and art gallery, was currently under construction north of the railway in Northbridge. However, it did not include a performing arts venue due to the exigencies of finance and city planning.

auditorium and administrative offices, as originally planned.⁷ In addition, many believed that the provision of a new concert hall was the responsibility of the State Government.

Following protracted negotiations between the two, it was agreed that a dedicated concert hall was required and that the State and Local Governments would share the costs involved.⁸ The State Government offered Perth City Council (PCC) Lot 853, a 3 acre (1.2ha) site on St George's Terrace, together with \$1 million on a dollar-for-dollar arrangement. During the March 1968 State elections, both political parties pledged their support for a concert hall. After the election, Premier Brand increased his original monetary offer by \$350,000 and in April 1968, PCC accepted the Government's proposal. Added to the financial arrangements was a donation of \$37,000 by Sir Thomas Wardle. This was the amount of profit he had made from the sale of the Capitol.⁹

Lot 853 had initially been part of the Government domain and the site of the old stables and vegetable garden.¹⁰ In the late 1950s, the Government made the land available for a hotel, the Chevron-Hilton, which was to be opened for the British and Empire (Commonwealth) Games in 1962.¹¹ However, work was abandoned due to the collapse of the project's financial backing, but not before massive concrete foundations had been laid at a cost of £60,000.¹²

The question now was one of design. A PCC committee recommended an architectural competition for *Perth Concert Hall*, but after much discussion it was agreed to commission the winners of the 1961 architectural competition. Jeffrey Howlett had been awarded a Hyderabad State Government scholarship to study architecture in England. He graduated with honours in 1950, from the Architectural Association School of Architecture, and followed his family to Perth in 1951. After five years in Perth he joined Bates, Smart & McCutcheon in Melbourne. He returned to Perth in 1961 when he won the *Council House* competition. His work in Perth includes Beatty Park Pool House, St Columba's College for the Uniting Church and Mt Newman House on the St George's Terrace Cloisters' site.¹³

In February 1969, Howlett & Bailey's new plan for a concert hall auditorium was approved. The new building, with an estimated cost of construction of \$3,107,500, was to be called *Perth Concert Hall*. In 1970, Lot 853 was gazetted A Class Reserve 30347 for the purpose of 'Concert Hall & Ancillary Uses, Restaurant & Vehicle Parking.'¹⁴ A Reserve (Concert Hall) Act was passed in 1972, which slightly altered the purpose of the reserve to 'Concert Hall, Restaurant, Tavern, Vehicle Parking, and Uses Ancillary thereto.'¹⁵

When designing the Concert Hall, the architects were influenced by a number of factors, including the large Commonwealth Taxation Office on the adjacent block, the requirements of the Perth City Council and the exiting footings laid

7 *The West Australian.*, 19 March 1968, p.1.

8 *The West Australian*, 13 January 1973, p. 24.

9 *The West Australian Big Weekend*, 24 January, 1998, p. 5.

10 PWD Plan 22148, 20 May 1922; MWSSDD sewerage plan, sheet 28, 8 July 1948.

11 *Master Builder*, 'Perth Concert Hall Supplement', November 1972, p. 3.

12 *ibid.*; *Sunday Times*, 11 March 1962, p. 1.

13 *Jeffrey Howlett*, catalogue of exhibition in Lawrence Wilson Gallery, UWA, Nov-Dec, 1992.

14 *Western Australian Government Gazette*, 8 May 1970, p. 1260.

15 'Reserve (Concert Hall) Act,' No. 96 of 1972; *Western Australian Government Gazette*, 16 February 1973, p. 465. The change of reserve designation was at the request of the Perth City Council, which wanted other projects incorporated into the design of the Hall.

for the defunct Chevron Hilton.¹⁶ The architects attempted to relate the Hall to the Taxation Office in terms of colour, texture and mass. The Hall was set back beyond the old Chevron footings, which were to be buried under a paved forecourt. This set back also complimented the set back of the Taxation Office and allowed for the possible eventual widening of St George's Terrace to William Street.¹⁷ At the request of the City of Perth, an underground car park was designed under the forecourt. Due to strikes causing major steel shortages in Australia, the lower levels of the car park were redesigned in concrete, allowing construction to proceed.¹⁸

Perth Concert Hall was designed primarily as a venue for musical performance. One reason for not making it a multi-purpose theatre were the problems of dovetailing opera, ballet and drama seasons with concert performances. It was also decided that the mechanism required to change staging facilities and acoustics for varied uses could prove more costly than the construction of separate venues.¹⁹ The brief for the project required that the architects give

...the highest priority to its musical uses, i.e. symphony concerts, choral concerts, organ recitals and, in addition, performances of minimum stages ballet, folk dances or musical drama, while also being suitable for other functions such as large civic receptions, conferences, conventions, public meetings, pageants, school speech days, pop concerts and folk singers.²⁰

To this end, *Perth Concert Hall* was designed to seat a total of 2,000 people, including a tiered choir gallery of 160 seats which could be used for additional auditorium seating. Included in the design at the request of PCC was a restaurant and foyer, which could accommodate about 1,000 people for banquets and balls. The stage was designed to hold an orchestra of over 100 players.²¹ On each side of the auditorium, exhibition galleries served an extra purpose as buffers against city noise.²²

Several consultants were involved in the design of the building, including an acoustic consultant, structural engineers, and experts in escalators, stage machinery and lighting. D. H. Fraser was responsible for the structural design and Dr. Harold Marshall was the acoustics consultant.²³ Dr. Marshall, an architect and acoustician,

...used a computer in a remarkable study to predict before the hall was built, how well people will hear in every one of the 2,000 seats...The scientific work done at

16 *The West Australian*, 12 October 1971, p. 10.

17 *ibid.* The architects initially considered removing the massive concrete; however, this was quickly rejected due to the cost and difficulty involved. The possibility of using the footings as the foundations of the new Hall was also dismissed. Instead, it was decided that the old footings be covered to provide a spacious forecourt, with the Hall set well back on the sloping site.

18 *ibid.*; *The West Australian*, 30 October 1968, p. 13. It was thought that the underground car park would be a lucrative addition to the City's parking facilities. At the time, there was only one other covered car park in the city (the James Street multi-storey). The car park at the Concert Hall could be used by shoppers and workers during the day, and by concert attendees at night.

19 Watney, Norman & Violet, *Music in Western Australia*, compiled for the Music Council of Western Australia Inc, Review No. 4, 1972, p. 25.

20 *ibid.*, quoting brief for project.

21 'Perth Concert Hall,' in *Architecture Australia*, December 1973, p.68.

22 'Perth Concert Hall: 25 years on,' in *The Architect*, Autumn 1998, pp. 14-19.

23 *The West Australian*, 12 October 1971, p. 10.

the Western Australian University by Dr. Marshall and his colleagues compares with any in the world.²⁴

Sabemo (WA) were awarded the contract for construction, with John Sherwood acting as Project Manager.²⁵ Several local companies, including Hollostone (WA) Pty Ltd, Midland Brick and Millars Timber provided materials for the building.²⁶ Work began on site on 12 June 1970.²⁷

An article in the *Master Builder* provides a good description of the building as it neared completion:

Both the gallery units and the staircase feature the specially imported white concrete used on most exposed surfaces of the building. The concrete, from Japan, has been given a timber-grain effect using New Zealand Oregon in the moulds. The whiteness of these textured surfaces contrasts with the rich redness of the Jarrah timber used extensively in the foyers, ceilings and balustrades. The coffered ceiling of the auditorium is a superb example of the richness this famous Western Australian hardwood lends to a building. Red carpeting inside and red-brick forecourts and terraces outside further add to the contrasts of this building...The building's bulk is disguised by the fact that three storeys are below St George's Terrace level. A 180 foot tunnel links the lower foyer (one of four foyers) with the north side of St George's Terrace...the first to be built under a Perth street.²⁸

Perth Concert Hall was awarded a Concrete Institute of Australia Excellence in Concrete Award for 1973, due to the 'Precast and in-situ concrete [which] had been skillfully designed to produce a well-designed building with a finish of remarkable consistency.'²⁹ During the 1960s and early 1970s, Western Australia's technical contribution to contemporary architecture was in the use of off-form concrete. Of particular significance was the use of white cement, which gave a finished off-white colour that achieved similar qualities of light and shadow as traditional materials such as limestone and sandstone.³⁰ Notable local examples of off-form concrete construction, which illustrate the development of the technology, include the Hale School Hall (1961), the Law School Building (1967) and the Guild Building (1971) at the University of Western Australia. The latter two also exhibit the use of white cement, which recalled the indigenous building palette, providing greater harmony with the environment than the more brutal grey concrete.

The completion of *Perth Concert Hall* was anticipated by many sections of the community. For example, it was noted in an article in the Music Council of Western Australia's newsletter that:

there will undoubtedly be minor quibbles and reservations regarding the Concert Hall, but Perth has at last a Concert Hall of international standard and it is a building that she can be proud of.³¹

24 *ibid.* Marshall, originally from New Zealand, was an Associate Professor of Architecture at UWA. He was also the acoustic consultant on the Geraldton Cathedral and the new Town Hall in Christchurch, New Zealand. In 1973, Marshall returned to New Zealand to take up an appointment at the University of Auckland.

25 *Master Builder*, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Lindsay Waller was listed as the Project Manager in *The West Australian* on 12 October 1971, suggesting a change in project management during the construction period.

26 *ibid.*

27 *The West Australian*, 13 June 1970, p. 7.

28 *Master Builder*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

29 *Architecture Australia*, 19 September, 1973.

30 Molyneux, Ian, 'Building in Western Australia 1940-1979,' in Morison, M. P. & White, J. (eds) *Western Towns and Buildings*, Perth, UWA Press, 1979, pp. 134-161.

31 Watney, N & V, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

It was generally agreed that the new Concert Hall would be a 'more than adequate home for the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra [sic]' and would be able to provide an adequate venue for opera and ballet, provided that 'simplified and imaginary scenery' was used rather than the traditional system of elaborate flats and backcloths.³² The capacity, comfort and acoustics of the venue were seen to be its most attractive features.³³

The Perth City Council and State Government, as well as the architects and builders, received many compliments on the Hall as it neared completion from visiting experts in the fields of music, architecture and construction.³⁴ By November 1972, conferences had been booked as far ahead as 1974, and the total bookings for the Hall's first year 'already exceeded 100'.³⁵

Perth Concert Hall was officially opened on Australia Day, 26 January 1973. The occasion also marked the Festival of Perth's 21st anniversary. Governor-General Sir Paul Hasluck officiated at the opening, which was attended by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and his wife on their first official visit to Western Australia. The evening included a midnight to dawn ball attended by almost 1,700 people. The WASO was joined by 55 members of the South Australian Symphony Orchestra for the occasion, and the whole event was televised. Headlines of 'A Milestone in the Cultural Life of WA' greeted the opening.³⁶ Earlier, John Birman, the Director of the Festival of Perth, had been quoted as saying '...it is the first concert hall in Australia since the war and has more than local significance...'³⁷

The first exhibition featured in the galleries flanking the auditorium consisted of 54 Sydney Nolan paintings, donated for the occasion of the opening of *Perth Concert Hall* by the artist. Valued at \$640,000, they consisted of a series of abstract wildflowers.³⁸ On permanent exhibition is a wildflower mural, measuring 34' x 8', by Melbourne artist Tom Sanders.³⁹ An individually designed organ, costing \$100,000, was commissioned from Ronald Sharp of Sydney, who was also responsible for the organ at the Sydney Opera House.⁴⁰ The larger pipes for the organ were imported from Holland. A nine-foot Steinway orchestral concert grand piano (model D) was also imported from West Germany for installation in the Hall.⁴¹

At the time of opening, *Perth Concert Hall* received praise from several quarters, including Patrick Thomas, conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, who commented on the 'plush and impressive' hall, with its 'clear yet lively sound'.⁴² The Director of the Australian Opera, Vincent A. Warrenner, also congratulated the PCC and the State Government on their achievement, with the qualifier that it was 'misleading to assume that Perth

32 *ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

33 *ibid.*

34 *Master Builder*, op. cit., p. 8.

35 *ibid.*

36 *The West Australian*, 26 January 1973, p. 6; 27 January 1973, p. 11; Hoffman, Leila, 'West Australian Music Makers,' bound typescript, 1987.

37 *Sunday Times*, 22 October, 1972, p. 36. Nevertheless, there were some criticisms of the opening, particularly from music lovers who were unable to get tickets to the civic launch organised by PCC.

38 *The West Australian*, 17 January 1973, p. 17. This represented all but 10 of Nolan's 64 wildflower paintings.

39 *Master Builder*, op. cit., p. 8.

40 Watney, N & V, op. cit., p. 25.

41 *The West Australian*, 13 January 1973, p. 26.

42 *The West Australian*, 26 January 1973, p. 11.

Concert Hall is suitable for staging operations and ballets, unless they were on a small scale...It is a beautiful concert hall – no more, no less'.⁴³

However, some criticisms of the Hall were beginning to surface by the end of 1973, due primarily to poor acoustic qualities. In a letter to *The West Australian*, a local resident condemned the use of the 'antiquated Victorian design', which caused some 'dead spots' as sound reverberated from the balconies. The structural overhang surrounding the orchestra was described as 'the perfect acoustic trap and an unforgivable error'. The ABC's efforts to broadcast from the Hall had also proved disastrous.⁴⁴

Despite such criticisms and the publicised fear that the Hall would run at a loss during the first year⁴⁵, Perth Concert Hall 'staggered critics' by making a small profit in the first five months of operation, staging an average of 4.5 shows a week.⁴⁶ Managed by Nigel Prescott, the Hall attracted many international stars, some of whom staged extra shows for the local audiences.⁴⁷

Since its opening, *Perth Concert Hall* has hosted more than 4,000 concerts and events, from heavy rock and roll to string quartets, from stand-up comedians to full symphony orchestras, from organ recitals to choral performances. The place is used as a community hall for school and university graduations, conferences, lectures and inaugurations. The galleries are used for displays, exhibitions and trade shows.

Perth Concert Hall is managed by the Perth Theatre Trust. Perth City Council owns the building and manages the car park, and the State Government owns the land. In 1998, *Perth Concert Hall* celebrated its 25th anniversary. A plaque commemorating the event was unveiled on 31 March 1998. Particular recognition was paid to architect Jeffrey Howlett. Another plaque commemorates the contribution of Sir Thomas Wardle, after whom the function room on the ground floor is named. In 1998, *Perth Concert Hall* continues to be a popular entertainment and function venue.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Perth Concert Hall is located on the south side of St George's Terrace, adjacent and to the east of Government House Grounds. The hall is set well back from the main thoroughfare of Perth, at the rear of a broad forecourt plaza. Terraced plazas to the south raise the building on a podium above Terrace Drive. This siting affords the place a level of civic focus and also allows advantage to be taken of river views.

Constructed in the Late Twentieth-Century Stripped Classical style, the building expresses the monumentality and formality of a classical temple featuring colonnades, symmetry and trabeated construction.⁴⁸ The imposing rectangular form is composed of a hefty horizontal roof plane balanced by the finer columns and vertical mullions of the glazed north and south walls. The sculptural and textural qualities of the rough sawn board, off-form concrete relieve some of this monumentality. Further enhancement is provided by the use of white-coloured concrete which evokes attributes of the local limestone.

43 *The West Australian*, 7 February 1973, p. 6.

44 *The West Australian*, 18 October 1973, p. 6.

45 *Sunday Independent*, 14 January 1973, p. 10.

46 *Sunday Independent*, 15 July 1973, p. 13.

47 *ibid.*

48 Apperly, et. al., *op. cit.*, pp. 228-229.

The Late Twentieth-Century Stripped Classical style was particularly appropriate to large free standing civic buildings. It came to prominence with the Lincoln Centre in New York in the early 1960s and found expression in Australia in Canberra at the Law Courts (1961) and National Library (1968). Local examples include the Reid Library at the University of Western Australia (1964) by Cameron, Chisholm and Nicol and Parliament House, Perth (1964) by E.H. Van Mens of the Public Works Department. As well as stylistic similarities, the siting of these places share a design feature in the large, uninterrupted forecourt which is essential to the appreciation of the composition.

Perth Concert Hall comprises two levels of undercroft parking with entrances from Terrace Drive and a separate service entrance via a ramp from St George's Terrace. The parking area is located on fill above the level of the retaining walls and raft of the incomplete Chevron Hilton Hotel. Pedestrian access to the main foyer level is provided by the broad sets of stairs and plazas rising above Terrace Road to the south, or via a ramp down from St George's Terrace, to the north. The main foyer level accommodates offices for the administration of the hall and BOCS ticketing facilities; a cafe, kitchen, bar and function room; toilets and entry to the main auditorium. The Wardle Function Room, located on the south side of the hall is a venue for corporate entertaining and seminars. The room opens onto the south terrace and also serves as a small theatre. Backstage facilities include the stage door entry from the underground car park; Green room; Assembly Room; male and female changerooms, conductor's room and production offices to the north of the stage. The solo dressing rooms and chorus room are located on the prompt side, the right hand side of the stage. A loading dock accessible from the vehicle ramp from St. George's Terrace, piano store and working area are located behind the stage, on the east side of the building.

The Terrace level foyer wraps around the enclosure of the auditorium with 'cathedral-like' volumes on the north and south sides. The six metre wide side galleries rise through the full height of the building with the long walls of glazing appearing to float above the foyer level glazing. In reality, the concrete mullioned walls are supported from the roof. Both galleries open onto the broad paved terraces on either side. The Western Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO) sponsor's lounge is enclosed behind a partition at the east end of the north gallery. The two upper foyers are restricted to the western end of the building decreasing in floor area as they ascend through the building. These upper level foyers are defined spatially by balustrades which allow a strong visual connection, with vertiginous qualities, between levels. There are extensive views over Government House Grounds and to the river and St George's Terrace from these foyers.

Vertical movement through the building is provided by a winding staircase around the central core of the circular lift shaft displaying the same off-form concrete as other structural elements. The foyer levels are carpeted and the external walls of the auditorium are constructed with unfinished, ribbed concrete blocks with the exception of the lower portion of the side walls which feature horizontal timber board panelling. Entry doors to the auditorium are of the same finish so that they are well disguised when closed. There is no ceiling under the exposed off-form concrete roof structure. Finishes in the offices and backstage areas are typically carpet and linoleum floors, and plaster and painted walls.

A glazed, ceramic tiled wall panel is a permanent, fixed artwork in the ground level foyer. The upper gallery levels are used as exhibition spaces with works

of art lining the walls. Commemorative plaques are evident adjacent to the Wardle Function Room, placed at the unveiling of the room in 1993; outside the WASO Sponsor's Lounge to recognise the assistance of Keith and Lesley Ingram and another is located at Terrace Foyer Level to signify the 25th anniversary of the *Perth Concert Hall* and in recognition of the architect, Jeffrey Howlett.

The shoe-box shape of the auditorium has been adopted from classical concert halls of international renown and contributes to the overall success of the acoustic quality. Seating is provided for 1729 with an additional 160 seats in the choir loft. The seating is raked and the two gallery levels form cantilevered terraces around the outer walls. The angled terraces along the sides terminate in balcony boxes which present an off-form concrete finish to the auditorium. The side panels of the boxes have been painted black, and illustrate a late design decision, as they were originally intended to be clear finished jarrah veneer. Side walls of the auditorium are also painted black contributing to the striking effect of the interior decor. Under low lighting conditions, the dark elements tend to disappear allowing more prominence to the red velvet seats and cream coloured concrete balconies. The effect is enhanced by the warm hues of timber evident in the stage, roof and panelling to the rear wall of the choir loft and organ. The unraked, jarrah stage accommodates a range of configurations for performance requirements, predominantly musical but minimum ballet and operatic performances can be staged, along with large scale civic receptions. The four levels of seating in the choir gallery wrap around the sides and back of the stage beneath the 3000 pipe organ located against the rear wall. The ceiling is composed of jarrah lined square coffers, with a light fitting in the centre of each form. Additional stage lighting is provided from the vertical trusses, painted black and mounted on the side walls.

There have been few major alterations to *Perth Concert Hall*. Some of the interior offices spaces, backstage and function facilities have been modified. Carpets and seats in the auditorium have been replaced through normal wear and tear and asbestos has been removed throughout. Consideration is currently being given to a development of the Concert Hall precinct.

13.3 REFERENCES

'Perth Concert Hall' in *Architecture Australia*, December 1973, pp. 64-68.

'Perth Concert Hall: 25 Years On' in *The Architect*, Autumn 1998, Vol. 38.1.

Perth City Council Files.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
