

**Submission  
No 1**

**INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Last year I independently compiled and released the Sydney Theatre Report, which profiled theatre venues in Sydney, and provided (on the last two pages) recommendations for government and other agencies on combating the crises facing our industry.

Since the release of this report, the crisis has only deepened: we are still facing all the same challenges, but some of the venues listed have since shut down and the shortage of venues is therefore even more dire.

I have attached the report and the original media release which listed the key findings.

Yours sincerely,  
Steven Hopley

# SYDNEY THEATRE REPORT 2015

Steven Hopley

Released January 2016

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# INTRODUCTION

There very nearly wasn't a Globe Theatre and, if this had been the case, most of the plays of William Shakespeare would now be lost.

When the owner of the land on which their playhouse, The Theatre, was located tried to seize ownership of the building, Shakespeare's theatre company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, was forced to take the drastic action of dismantling their building in the dead of night and reassembling it outside the boundaries of the city council area. They had already lost their second venue, Blackfriars, because wealthy local residents complained about the noise and traffic it would create; so if they had lost the building materials from the structure of The Theatre as well, the result would almost certainly have spelt the end of the company for which Shakespeare wrote most of his greatest works. And without the renown of his later works, even some of his earlier ones might have slipped into obscurity and been lost to us, like so many other plays from the period.

The closure of two performance spaces in the Tap Gallery at Darlinghurst recently was a disaster for the independent theatre sector, but this is the mere tip of the iceberg. The last decade has seen: the historic Footbridge Theatre renovated into a lecture hall; the Crypt in Balmain strangled with red tape; the Sidetrack Theatre ransacked; an independent space on Alice Street in Newtown demolished; the hall that housed the Actors Centre performances lost in their move; the Newtown Theatre's lease on the St George's Hall cancelled for use as a school hall; the Cleveland Street Theatre left abandoned; the Valhalla, once the historic New Arts Theatre, stripped to bare brick by developers before a heritage order could be placed on it; and some very funny things indeed have happened on the way to the Forum. The New Olympia Theatre opened in Paddington on a short-term lease in late 2014, with the potential for a second theatre on site, but despite the creator's best efforts to hand his theatre over for continued use, no support could be found, so the theatre opened only to close again after a few months. Two UNSW theatres – Io Myers and Studio 1 – have been earmarked for demolition in the next few years, along with the Bondi Pavillion Amphitheatre, and in the time I have spent writing this report, the historic Fig Tree Theatre – once known as the Old Tote – has been closed, and the Archway 1 Theatre has been given notice of eviction by City of Sydney council. And then there are the internal shifts that are the inevitable result of a dwindling choice of venues: theatres changing hands, becoming more insular and exclusive, moving away from performance hire to conferences and private functions and, of course, skyrocketing hire rates.

And so, because bricks and mortar are inextricably linked with the success of the arts, particularly theatre, and because the shortage and exclusivity of venues over the last few years has reached the point of crisis, it seemed timely to provide a free resource which lists and details all the venues in the Sydney theatre scene, how these venues are being used, and how accessible they are to the stakeholders who are providing us with the performances that define theatre in our city.

## TRANSPARENCY

As a young producer starting out in a regional area, I contacted my local council about the hire of one of their venues. They were cagey about prices, and instead of giving me rates, they bombarded me with questions about the production: what I wanted to do, when I wanted to do it, and so forth. Since I knew the other council venue was hired by the day, I suggested two weekends of Friday and Saturday shows, in order to save money on what was a risky new work that I was funding myself. They quoted me a price and I accepted, but they delayed on sending me a contract until I had already advertised the show; so by the time I discovered the venue was actually rented by the week, and not by the day, it was too late. I could've paid half as much in rent and put on twice the amount of performances, and thereby made a small profit to share with the artists who gave their time to the project, instead of only just barely breaking even.

I'm older and wiser now; still, every time I contact a venue, there is obfuscation and secrecy about hire rates, and I'm bombarded with the same questions. I often have to chase theatres, sometimes for several months, in order to obtain any information at all. At the very least, it seems an odd way to treat a potential customer. And while it is true that some productions will have different requirements, it is not impossible – nor even terribly difficult – for every venue to have a clear and accessible pricing structure.

I must thank the very small handful of theatres that have responded to my requests for information and participated happily with the report. All listed theatres were contacted, but almost none responded immediately, and for the most part, getting the information I required was something akin to sucking cement through a straw. As an example, though this report deals with the 2014-2015 financial year, it could not be released until early 2016 because it took so long to retrieve all the required details. Only through a combination of persistence, months of tedious research, and drawing upon my contacts and years of experience within the industry, have I managed to complete the report at all. (I would very much like to acknowledge the colleagues who assisted me with sourcing some of the information, but I will not name them for fear of repercussions.) I've found theatres previously difficult to approach suddenly responsive, and theatres previously quite happy to provide information suddenly defensive. I have experienced avoidance, delay tactics, outright hostility, demands to be omitted, and even received fabricated and misleading figures.

The lack of transparency is appalling, and I think it's time to let the sun shine in.

## GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

Although it is difficult to define precisely, the “Sydney theatre scene” is generally considered to be based in the inner city and surrounding suburbs that provide most of Sydney's professional, commercial and independent theatre venues. Outside of this area, venues tend to fall into various regional concerns.

The area stretches as far as the UNSW and NIDA venues in the south-east, to the Bondi Pavillion on the coast, up to the Ensemble and Independent Theatres just north of the harbour bridge, through Leichhardt and to the end of the Newtown strip which

sprawls south-west into Marrickville. Essentially, we're talking about Central Sydney, some of the Eastern suburbs and a large part of the Inner West (see Figure 1).

Seven local governments make up this area, namely City of Sydney council, North Sydney council, Marrickville council, Leichhardt council, Woollahra council, Waverley council, and Randwick council. I have therefore used the boundaries of these seven councils as the survey area for this report (with the exception of Randwick, for which I have taken the three northern wards only, since the two southern wards are geographically quite removed from the area: see Figure 2).



Figure 1



Figure 2

This area represents a resident population of over 600,000 people, though of course the Sydney theatre scene caters to all of Sydney, and the catchment area for audiences is much wider still – it is not unusual for people to travel to central Sydney from Wollongong, the Blue Mountains, or the Central Coast to see an evening of theatre – an area covering almost 5,000,000 people.

## PROFILE TERMS

The only criteria I have used for inclusion as a theatre venue are:

1. The room has been designed, renovated, or dedicated for use as a theatre venue;
- or
2. The room is currently being utilized as a dedicated theatre venue.

As theatre performances have somewhat specific requirements, I have not included venues that were built with other performance media in mind, and I have not included

outdoor performance areas since they are often difficult to define; also, outdoor theatre is a beast of a different colour, with its own set of criteria and unique challenges.

**Status** refers to the different management models of theatre: “commercial” refers to theatres hired to productions that are large enough to make a profit<sup>1</sup>; “professional” to theatres owned by resident companies that pay award rates to cast and crew; “community” to theatres run by volunteers; “hire” to venues available for rent by professional or independent (ie, running on a semi-professional or co-operative basis) theatre companies; “curated” to venues run by an organization that prepares a calendar of works, chosen from resident companies or from submissions by theatre companies and other arts organizations; and “student” to high school, university and drama school venues.

**Size** is determined partly by capacity: as a guide, small = under 100 seats; medium = 250-500; large = 800+. However, I have also taken the size of the stage and the proximity of the furthest audience member into account, so some theatres will fall outside of these numbers.

Theatres will sometimes talk about “occupancy rates”, which refers to the days per year the theatre was hired, though not necessarily used, and which might include classes, meetings, private functions, corporate events, and any number of other things that

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1. One of the nation's largest and most successful professional theatre companies is Bell Shakespeare, and despite their frugal budgeting that reserves most of their expenditure for wages, they still only cover about 20% of their expenses with ticket sales (approximately 10% is covered by government funding and 70% by private donations). The only way to make a profit in theatre is the with commercial theatre model, which requires large amounts of start-up capital and aims for the largest venues and very long runs – and even then, the one odd success will pay for the inevitable two or three failures in between, and if that does not come the impresario may well end in bankruptcy. This model favours big musicals, and generally does not at all support non-musical theatre as it naturally makes necessities like intimacy and creative risk all but impossible. It may well be said, then, that theatre cannot pay for itself and must not, therefore, be considered a business in any traditional sense – nor are the arts a charity, but surely in our mindset we must place the theatre somewhere between a business and a charity.

However, theatre is not only an integral asset to any civilized nation, and an invaluable tool with which to view society and review the world around us, but it is also true that a vibrant theatre culture stimulates other economies. People not only come to the city to see a show, they make a day or night of it; they are eating and drinking in the surrounding restaurants, pubs and cafes, they are paying for transport and to park their cars, etc. The spectacular puppetry act *The Giants* cost \$5.4M as an opener to the Perth International Arts Festival last year, but government figures show that it in fact brought in almost \$40M of revenue to local businesses alone\*. In the words of Richard Roxburgh: “Where art is, life follows. This was discovered to great effect in New York's Soho in the 1970s, where peppercorn rent allowed artists to take over spaces and use them in a very visible way. Suddenly people started going there. It is an interesting paradox that where artists go, money follows.”\*\*

\*The Sunday Times 3/5/2015

<http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/giants-extravaganza-worth-40-million-to-perth-businesses-government-research/news-story/6cbb63d134dc7ce0d369bd493aa79ae0>

\*\*SMH 26/9/2014

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/richard-roxburgh-on-his-vision-for-the-sydney-morning-herald-spectrum-now-presented-by-anz-20140923-10ktdm.html#ixzz3vkf9gsDX>



have no relevance to the theatre, or even the arts. I have therefore come up with two separate figures that will better reflect how our theatres are being utilized, both for theatre, and for the arts in general.

**Days per year used** refers to all days in the 2014-2015 financial year on which the venue was open for performance and arts events ticketed to the general public. This excludes days of use for private performances, as well as closed rehearsals, readings and workshops.

**Days used for theatre** refers to all days in the 2014-2015 financial year on which plays and other dramatic works were shown, to the exclusion of musical theatre, opera, dance, film, stand-up comedy, concerts, development showings, and other forms of non-theatrical performance.

**Hire rates** are as of June 30, 2015; prices may have increased with the new financial year and/or calendar year. Prices printed have been done so with the best available information at the time, and every effort has been made to distinguish those prices that are not inclusive of GST and other fees. As some theatres refused to cooperate with this report, hire rates marked with an \* denote those gathered from indirect sources. Wherever I've discovered prices are not inclusive of GST, I've noted it, but I can't promise I've found them all, as not all venues are upfront about their additional costs. It should also be kept in mind that public liability insurance is a requirement for most venues. The rates and charges I've noted are basic fees only, naturally there are extra charges for additional requirements, which may be too numerous and complex to list here. This is intended as a guide only, so producers should make their own enquiries.

# THEATRE PROFILES

## Alastair Mackerras Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Sydney Grammar School, Stanley St, Darlinghurst
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Sydney Grammar School
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Medium-large
<b>Capacity:</b>	700
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** Sydney Grammar School is one of Australia's oldest and most exclusive private schools, established in 1854. This theatre is on its College Street senior campus. Named after the headmaster, it opened in 1983 with the first performance conducted by his brother, Sir Charles Mackerras.



## Archway 1 Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Bicentennial Park, Chapman Rd, Annandale
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	City of Sydney Council/Archway 1 Theatre Company
<b>Status:</b>	Community
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	40
<b>Days per year used:</b>	12 (3%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	12 (3%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.archway1theatre.com">www.archway1theatre.com</a>

**Notes:** Archway 1 is an intimate venue located in the viaduct under the light rail in Bicentennial Park. Archway 1 Theatre, a group committed to equal opportunity and diversity in casting, opened the venue in 2012 and use the space for their productions; they don't hire it to other theatre companies for performances, although they do hire it for non-theatrical performances, such as comedians, poets, musicians and filmmakers, and to other theatre companies for rehearsals. Run on a “European style” of management, the company only puts on its own performances when it has the funds to do so – when not in use as a theatre, it's variously referred to as the Archway 1 Gallery or Archway 1 Studio, and even used as a coffee shop. The City of Sydney has given the theatre notice of eviction for February 2016, and is planning to build a skate park at the site.



# ATYP Studio 1

<b>Address:</b>	Pier 4/5, Hickson Rd, Dawes Point
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government/Australian Theatre for Young People
<b>Status:</b>	Student/Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	90
<b>Days per year used:</b>	94 (26%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	86 (24%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Outside hire considered on application.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.atyp.com.au">www.atyp.com.au</a>

**Notes:** ATYP moved into their current wharf space in 1998. Predominately used in the past for ATYP classes and the occasional ATYP production, demand in recent years has seen Studio 1 used increasingly for performance, both for ATYP productions as well as for independent productions as part of a curated season. In 2015, it was not available for hire at all outside of the curated season, but there is no policy in place as yet to make this arrangement permanent. Movable seating banks provide the usual theatre set-up for 90 patrons, but loose chairs can be added depending on the configuration.



## Belvoir Street Downstairs Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	25 Belvoir St, Surry Hills
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Company A/Company B
<b>Status:</b>	Professional
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	80
<b>Days per year used:</b>	121 (33%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	121 (33%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$800 for 4 hours, plus GST, plus staff wages. Discounts available for longer hires. Only available to productions paying award wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.belvoir.com.au">www.belvoir.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Originally a rehearsal room during the early Nimrod days, it was adapted into an alternative theatre space in 1976. Between 1984 and 1997, it was reconfigured several times and governed by various curatorial policies, but in 1998, after the success of Theatre Hydra at the Old Fitz, Belvoir launched their own season of independent theatre in the space called B Sharp. When Ralph Meyers became Artistic Director in 2011, B Sharp was shut down in favour of utilizing the space for Belvoir's own productions. Despite only using the venue for part of the year, it was nonetheless closed off even to potential hire by independent producers with the initiation of a policy that hire be only made available to productions paying award wages. Although an exception seems to have been made for the Actors College of Theatre and Television, who have recently begun performing some of their graduate productions in there, this anti-independent sector policy will remain under new Artistic Director Eamon Flack. As a result, most of the bookings for the space outside of Belvoir shows go to private dinners and corporate hirers.



## Belvoir Street Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	25 Belvoir St, Surry Hills
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Company A/Company B
<b>Status:</b>	Professional
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	300
<b>Days per year used:</b>	281 (77%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	277 (76%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Occasionally available for hire between shows during their season. \$1,500 for 4 hours, plus GST, plus staff wages. Discounts available for longer hires. Only available to productions paying award wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.belvoir.com.au">www.belvoir.com.au</a>

**Notes:** An old salt and sauce factory on Belvoir Street was leased in 1974 by the Nimrod Theatre and was operated under that name until they moved to the Seymour Centre in 1984. Although there were plans at first to sell the building to the highest bidder, in one of the great stories of artists rallying together, ex-Nimrod employees Sue Hill and Chris Westwood gathered enough support from the theatre community to place a deposit on the building, and during the next few months put together a syndicate of 600 shareholders who each paid \$1000 to establish Company A and purchase the premises. Company B was then established alongside to manage the venue's creative output, and they've been running the venue ever since – although, over the last few years they've ditched the Company B moniker in favour of trading name Belvoir.



## Black Box Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	St Andrew's Cathedral School, 51 Druitt St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	St Andrew's Cathedral School
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	90
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** St Andrew's Cathedral School is an Anglican school founded in 1885, located at Sydney Square, in the heart of the city. In 1991, the school acquired a building around the corner on Druitt Street, in which they constructed this theatre in 2008.





## Bondi Pavilion Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Bondi Pavilion, 1 Queen Elizabeth Drive, Bondi Beach
<b>LGA:</b>	Waverley
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Waverley Council
<b>Status:</b>	Unknown
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	220
<b>Days per year used:</b>	74 (20%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	73 (20%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Was not available for outside hire during 2015.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** The Bondi Pavilion was constructed on Sydney's most famous beach in 1928. By the 1970s, several parts of the building had fallen into disuse, including the ballroom. The Bondi Theatre Group worked with Waverley Council to turn the ballroom into a theatre and it was officially opened in 1974 by Gough Whitlam. After spending some years as a hire venue, Rock Surfers Theatre Company took over management of the venue in 2012 for their curated seasons. Waverley Council have recently announced a multi-million dollar renovation for the Pavilion, which will include some potential changes for the theatre: currently, the plans suggest improved backstage and foyer facilities, but a slightly reduced capacity. In December of 2015, Rock Surfers made a surprise announcement that they would cease trading immediately, leaving the future management of the venue unclear.



## Carriageworks Bay 17

<b>Address:</b>	Carriageworks, 245 Wilson St, Eveleigh
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government/Carriageworks Ltd
<b>Status:</b>	Curated/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	800
<b>Days per year used:</b>	17 (5%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for hire outside of curated works.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.carriageworks.com.au">www.carriageworks.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The Eveleigh Rail Yards were built on the site in the 1880s, including the now heritage-listed Carriageworks site. The site was eventually closed in 1988 and was purchased by the NSW Ministry for the Arts in 2002. It was officially reopened in 2007 as a multi-arts centre. Carriageworks Ltd was set up by the NSW Government to independently administer the venue, which now plays host to several resident arts companies. Bay 17 is the larger of the theatre spaces in the venue, with room for 360 in the seating bank and more on the floor.



## Carriageworks Bay 20

<b>Address:</b>	Carriageworks, 245 Wilson St, Eveleigh
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government/Carriageworks Ltd
<b>Status:</b>	Curated/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Medium-large
<b>Capacity:</b>	332
<b>Days per year used:</b>	28 (8%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for hire outside of curated works.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.carriageworks.com.au">www.carriageworks.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The Eveleigh Rail Yards were built on the site in the 1880s, including the now heritage-listed Carriageworks site. The site was eventually closed in 1988 and was purchased by the NSW Ministry for the Arts in 2002. It was officially reopened in 2007 as a multi-arts centre. Carriageworks Ltd was set up by the NSW Government to independently administer the venue, which now plays host to several resident arts companies. Bay 20 is the smaller of the theatre spaces in the venue, with room for 270 in the seating banks and more on the floor, and in the past has hosted productions by Belvoir and Griffin.



# Capitol Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	13 Campbell St, Haymarket
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Foundation Entertainment Group
<b>Status:</b>	Commercial
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	2,038
<b>Days per year used:</b>	246 (67%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$11,500 per day, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.capitoltheatre.com.au">www.capitoltheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The building started as the Belmore Markets in 1892, then became a circus in 1916 and was converted to a cinema in 1928. After being saved from the bulldozers in 1981 by a conservation order, the theatre was restored and renovated, reopening as a performance venue in 1995. It has been the home to long-running musicals such as Miss Saigon, Wicked and The Lion King, and has been used by Opera Australia for productions too big for the Opera House.



## Cell Block Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	National Art School, Forbes St, Darlinghurst
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	National Art School
<b>Status:</b>	Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	230
<b>Days per year used:</b>	1 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$3,300 per day (midday to midnight), plus GST. Additional charges for cleaning and security.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.nas.edu.au">www.nas.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** From 1841, this was the women's cell block of the Old Darlinghurst Gaol. In 1921, the gaol became the East Sydney Technical College, then the National Art School in 1995. The principal during the 1950s, W.R. Crisp, led a campaign to turn the then-derelict building into a theatre venue. Visiting stars Katharine Hepburn and Sybil Thorndyke, along with Sir Robert Helpmann, threw their support behind it and helped raise funds. As a result, the Cell Block Theatre was opened in 1958 and became an important venue for both classical and avant-garde theatre, as well as music and dance throughout the next few decades: Yvonne Kenny performed her first opera there, the ABC recorded classical concerts for broadcast, and John Bell appeared in the Wakefield Mystery Plays. For the last few decades, despite a few exceptions, the venue has predominately been used as an exhibition space for the art school and hired out for weddings and corporate events. It's a challenging space for producers to work in, given hire doesn't include tiered seating or any technical equipment, and lighting bars that are very high and difficult to access.



## The Cellar Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Holme Building, Science Rd, Sydney University, Camperdown
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Sydney University/Sydney University Dramatic Society
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	40
<b>Days per year used:</b>	162 (44%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	136 (37%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.sudsusyd.com">www.sudsusyd.com</a>

**Notes:** Sydney Univeristy Dramatic Society was established in 1889 and has occupied a range of different spaces in that time. The Holme Building had an extension built in the early 1960s, to include a buttery and two new clubrooms. The buttery was converted to a jazz club, then into a theatre later that decade. Although primarily used since then by SUDS, it wasn't officially dedicated to their use until 2001.



## Coote Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	The Scots College, Victoria Rd, Bellevue Hill
<b>LGA:</b>	Woollahra
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	The Scots College
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	200
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** The Scots College is a Presbyterian day and boarding school for boys, which was established in 1893 and moved to the current campus at Bellevue Hill two years later. The Coote Theatre is located in the Centenary Centre on the senior campus, and was officially opened by the Governor General in 1999.



## Dame Joan Sutherland Centre Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	St Catherine's School, 26 Albion St, Waverley
<b>LGA:</b>	Waverley
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	St Catherine's School
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	250
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** St Catherine's is an Anglican school for girls. The Dame Joan Sutherland Centre was opened in 1994 by its namesake, and the school's most famous alumni, Dame Joan Sutherland. The school is now looking to upgrade to a 500 seat theatre, stating on their website that they're constructing “a new state-of-the-art professional grade auditorium which addresses the constraints of the existing play-box theatre... including its small spectator gallery, insufficient back-of-house facilities, inadequate size to accommodate school performances etc”. The school has stated, however, that the Dame Joan Sutherland Centre Theatre will, at least for the moment, remain in place.





## Enmore Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	118-132 Enmore Rd, Newtown
<b>LGA:</b>	Marrickville
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Century Venues
<b>Status:</b>	Commercial
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	1,650
<b>Days per year used:</b>	246 (67%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	*Approximately \$15,000-\$25,000 per night, depending on the night of the week, inclusive of additional costs and staff wages. Weekly hire available.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.enmoretheatre.com.au">www.enmoretheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Opened as a cinema in 1912, the building was renovated in 1920 to include live performance, and has had many renovations since. The venue was closed in 1984, then taken over and redeveloped by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. Since then, under Century Venues, it has predominately been used as a music and comedy venue, with removable seating in the stalls to allow for a greater capacity standing room for concerts.



## Ensemble Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	78 McDougall St, Kirribilli
<b>LGA:</b>	North Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government/Ensemble Theatre
<b>Status:</b>	Professional
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	216
<b>Days per year used:</b>	274 (75%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	274 (75%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire, although the occasional one-night-only performance can be arranged, providing it is performed on the set in use for the current production: \$600 for a half day, or \$1,000 for the full day.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.ensemble.com.au">www.ensemble.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Established in 1960 in a renovated boatshed on Careening Cove, the venue was Sydney's first harbourside theatre, and a home for Hayes Gordon's theatre company of the same name that had formed two years earlier. Originally a theatre-in-the-round, it was altered to a more conventional theatre format with audience on three sides when the venue was refurbished during the early 1980s.



## Eternity Playhouse

<b>Address:</b>	39 Burton St, Darlinghurst
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	City of Sydney Council/Darlinghurst Theatre Company
<b>Status:</b>	Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	200
<b>Days per year used:</b>	263 (72%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	218 (60%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Occasionally available for hire between shows during the curated season. \$1,200 for 5 hours, or \$2,200 for 10 hours, plus GST, plus staff wages. Discounts may be available for community groups and not-for-profits.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.darlinghursttheatre.com">www.darlinghursttheatre.com</a>

**Notes:** The Burton Street Tabernacle was built in the 1880s and was acquired by the Sydney City Council in 2004 after having been closed for eight years. They converted the space into a theatre, offering it to the Darlinghurst Theatre Company, and it opened in 2013.



## Everest Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Seymour Centre, City Rd, Darlington
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Sydney University
<b>Status:</b>	Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Medium-large
<b>Capacity:</b>	513
<b>Days per year used:</b>	219 (60%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	87 (24%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$6,450 per day (single performance only), or \$6,950 Saturdays, or \$8,500 Sundays, plus GST. \$29,500-\$33,600 per week (dependant on number of performances), plus GST. Ticketing charges apply. Discounts may be available for selected community groups.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.seymourcentre.com">www.seymourcentre.com</a>

**Notes:** Sydney businessman and philanthropist, Everest Seymour, died in 1966 and left a bequest to the city for a performing arts centre. The University of Sydney became the trustee of the bequest, and when it opened in 1975, it was called The Seymour Centre. The Everest Theatre is the second largest space in the centre, and was designed with musical performances in mind. Although occasionally used for theatrical purposes, it is most frequently used for musical, dance and school performances.



## Fig Tree Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Gate 4, High St, University of New South Wales, Kensington
<b>LGA:</b>	Randwick
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	University of New South Wales/Campus Living Villages
<b>Status:</b>	Hire/Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	166
<b>Days per year used:</b>	24 (7%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	22 (6%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	*Approximately \$500 per day.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** In 1962, UNSW offered NIDA three buildings for their home, including the old totaliser betting house and an ex-army tin barracks building from the second world war. Although the theatre was actually built in the barracks, it became known as the Old Tote Theatre. The Old Tote Theatre Company broke away from NIDA in 1968 and continued performing in the space, with the latter moving to bigger premises across the road. Known for a time as the Tin Shed Theatre, it eventually earned the name Fig Tree Theatre for the grand tree beside it that is known to interrupt performances with thuds of dropping fruit upon the tin roof. In 2010, the management of the theatre was taken out of the hands of the university faculties and given to Campus Living Villages, an external organization that runs the accommodation in the UNSW Village. In September of this year, they had their access to the theatre revoked due to wiring issues, and so this icon is currently closed until further notice.



## Fuse Box

<b>Address:</b>	Factory Theatre, 105 Victoria Rd, Marrickville
<b>LGA:</b>	Marrickville
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Century Venues
<b>Status:</b>	Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	142
<b>Days per year used:</b>	155 (42%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	51 (14%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	*\$2,000 per week, plus GST, or 30% box office revenue, whichever is greater, plus \$220 per performance for staff wages. Rates may be higher for shows without an interval.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.factorytheatre.com.au">www.factorytheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The Factory Theatre was built as a music and comedy venue in 2006, and since then virtually every available space has been used for performance – particularly during the Sydney Fringe Festival, when even store rooms have been utilized. One of these venues was named the Fuse Box and although it has been aimed more towards theatrical use, it still heavily features comedy and music events.



## Genesisian Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	420 Kent St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Genesisian Theatre Company
<b>Status:</b>	Community
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	125
<b>Days per year used:</b>	93 (25%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	93 (25%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.genesiantheatre.com.au">www.genesiantheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Originally St John's Church, built in 1868, the building became the Kursaal Theatre in 1932, housing the Sydney Repertory Company. In 1938 it became a hostel, but was reclaimed as a theatre in 1954 by the Genesisian Theatre Company, who had formed ten years earlier from members of the Catholic Youth Organization. They took their name from the patron saint of actors, Saint Genesius, and also gave it to the theatre. Although members are no longer required to be Catholic, the company still pray before each performance. Performances are usually only on weekends, and the theatre is used for classes and other purposes during the week.



## Giant Dwarf Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	199 Cleveland St, Redfern
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Private/Giant Dwarf
<b>Status:</b>	Curated/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	280
<b>Days per year used:</b>	250 (68%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$1200 per night, plus GST. Rates may vary depending on use.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.giantdwarf.com.au">www.giantdwarf.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The building was once the Railway Union Hall, at one stage a brothel, at some point an illegal casino, and it became The Performance Space in the early 1980s when it was initially squatted in by Mike Mullins, founder of the avant garde theatre group of the same name. When Performance Space became resident at Carriageworks in 2007, the venue was briefly managed by the Actors College of Theatre and Television as the Cleveland Street Theatre. When ACTT vacated in 2010, it was left abandoned for some time, until the team behind The Chaser took it over in 2014, turning it into a comedy venue and renaming it after their television production company.





## The Hayes Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	19 Greenknowe Ave, Potts Point
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	City of Sydney Council/Independent Music Theatre
<b>Status:</b>	Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	111
<b>Days per year used:</b>	247 (68%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for hire for non-musical productions.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.hayestheatre.com.au">www.hayestheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** This space in the Reginald Murphy Centre was offered to the Darlinghurst Theatre Company in 2001, by what was then South Sydney Council, after their previous venue was damaged in a severe storm. The company was resident there until 2012, when they were offered new premises at the Eternity Playhouse. The City of Sydney council initially planned to redevelop, but after public outcry the space was put out to tender to arts organizations. The winning bidder was Independent Music Theatre (which comprises a partnership of Luckiest Productions, Neil Goodings Productions and Neglected Musicals) with their proposal to turn the venue into a much-needed venue for independent musicals. Named after the musical theatre star Nancye Hayes, this is a musical and cabaret venue only – plays with songs, or where music is an integral part of the performance, might be considered by their submissions panel, but otherwise they won't hire to non-musical productions.



## The Independent Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	269 Miller St, North Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	North Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Wenona School
<b>Status:</b>	Student/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	303
<b>Days per year used:</b>	17 (5%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$1,800 for 5 hours, or \$2,700 for ten hours, or \$4,320 for three consecutive performances days, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.theindependent.org.au">www.theindependent.org.au</a>

**Notes:** Originally a tram shed built in the 1880s, it was converted into a theatre named the Coliseum in 1911, and was purchased by the Independent Theatre and reopened under the same name in 1939. Over the years, many well-known actors trod the boards there, including Rod Taylor, Ruth Cracknell, John Mellion and Bud Tingwell, but with Artistic Director Dame Doris Fitton's health flagging, it closed down in 1977. It was used for the Ensemble Studios Acting School by Hayes Gordon in the 1980s, and was then purchased by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in 1989. They planned to redevelop, but plans faltered and they sold it to the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation in 1993. SBW held a community fundraising campaign to renovate and reopen the venue, which they did in 1998, and then sold it back to the AETT in 2004, who in turn sold it off to the nearby Wenona Girls' School in 2013. In recent years, most of the performances in the space have been short runs and one-off performances by music groups and the occasional small opera, with hire rates too high for most independent theatre companies; it is hired besides for private events, and used for school performances and staff meetings.



## Io Myers Studio

<b>Address:</b>	Gate 2, High St, University of New South Wales, Kensington
<b>LGA:</b>	Randwick
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	University of New South Wales
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	124
<b>Days per year used:</b>	36 (10%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	12 (3%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$2,500 per week, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au">https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** Built in 1982, it was named after Lady Io Myers, a Vice-Chancellor's wife who worked tirelessly as a fundraiser for the university. It is designed as a multi-purpose space, with retractable seating for 124, though it can be used in a number of configurations with loose chairs. One of the conditions of hire is that the timber flooring cannot be painted or have any set fixed to it, which limits its theatrical possibilities. The venue is used for classes, workshops, rehearsals, and exhibitions, as well as student performances for the School of the Arts & Media. It is slated for demolition, alongside of Studio One, for the creation of a landscaped public area by 2020.



## Italian Forum Cultural Centre

<b>Address:</b>	The Italian Forum, 23 Norton St, Leichhardt
<b>LGA:</b>	Leichhardt
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Co.As.It/Actors Centre Australia
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	323
<b>Days per year used:</b>	30 (8%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Effectively unavailable for outside hire during the financial year due to the uncertainty on their lease, but ACA are hoping to change that in 2016.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.actorscentreaustralia.com.au">www.actorscentreaustralia.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The land for the Italian Forum was given to the Italian community by Premier Neville Wran in 1988, on the proviso that 10% of the development be set aside for cultural facilities. After 21 years, that promise was finally kept when the Italian Forum Cultural Centre was opened in 2009. This opening made so little impact that it was again opened in 2012. Although there was some initial interest from major companies such as Bell Shakespeare and the Sydney Festival, the expensive hire rates, poor management, and lack of public awareness (there is still no street signage to suggest that the venue even exists), saw the venue sit empty for the vast majority of the time. The Italian Forum Ltd went into administration in late 2013, and this \$10 million dollar publicly-funded asset was sold for a mere \$2.8 million. The legal battle for ownership saw the council face off with administrators SV Partners in the supreme court, but finally the council's preferred bidder – Italian language school Co.As.It – was given the venue in late 2014. The Actors Centre Australia has leased the venue on a long-term contract since early 2014, but have found their tenancy constantly under threat – a threat that is far from over.



## King Street Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Level 1, 644 King St, Erskineville
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Private/EMU Productions
<b>Status:</b>	Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	100
<b>Days per year used:</b>	149 (41%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	121 (33%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$880 per performance, or \$2,420 per week (maximum 7 performances) plus \$242 staff wages per performance. EMU Productions will co-produce selected shows with a 50/50 box office share.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.kingstreettheatre.com.au">www.kingstreettheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** A subdivision of the old Masonic Hall built on the corner of King and Bray Streets in the 1880s, this space was subsequently a pool hall, a boxing gym, and a car upholstery factory, before conversion to a theatre in the 1980s. It was known first as The Edge Theatre, then it became the Newtown Theatre when they had to vacate the St George's Hall in 2005, and then a change of management brought another change of name in 2012.



## Lend Lease Darling Quarter Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Terrace 3, 1-25 Harbour St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Lend Lease Funds Management/Monkey Baa Theatre Company
<b>Status:</b>	Professional/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	236
<b>Days per year used:</b>	95 (26%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	95 (26%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$1,500 for 5 hours (Monday to Friday only). \$2,200 for 10 hours, or \$2,500 Saturdays, or \$3,200 Sundays. \$8,500 per week (maximum 40 hours). Ticketing charges apply.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.monkeybaa.com.au">www.monkeybaa.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority partnered with Lend Lease to create the Darling Quarter development at Darling Harbour, complete with offices, restaurants, a large children's playground, and a theatre for kid's shows which was opened in 2012. Monkey Baa Theatre Company won the tender to manage the space rent-free for five years; between their own productions, they hire to other theatre companies and corporate events.



## Mantouridion Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Hut 36, Addison Road Community Centre, Addison Rd, Marrickville
<b>LGA:</b>	Marrickville
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Addison Road Community Centre/Hellenic Art Theatre
<b>Status:</b>	Community
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	170
<b>Days per year used:</b>	55 (15%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	55 (15%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Outside hire considered on application.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.hellenicarttheatre.com.au">www.hellenicarttheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The Hellenic Art Theatre was established in 1983 by members of the old Hellenic Theatrical Group, and they moved into the Greek Cultural Association's hut at ARCC in 1985. Although named after the founder of the Hellenic Theatrical Group, Chrysostomos Mantouridis, it is popularly known as the Greek Theatre. Their repertoire includes plays by International and Greek playwrights, local Greek-Australian playwrights as well as Ancient Greek playwrights. Part of their mission is to perform plays in Greek to keep the language alive for the new generation of Greeks in Australia, although since 2002 their Greek-language productions have included English surtitles. Although they will accept applications for hire, they are highly selective, and generally only hire to associated artists.



## Miguel Pro Playhouse

<b>Address:</b>	St Aloysius' College, 47 Upper Pitt St, Milson's Point
<b>LGA:</b>	North Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	St Aloysius' College
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	120
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** St Aloysius' College is a Jesuit school, and in 2005 they opened a new theatre for school drama performances on their senior school campus, and named it after the martyred Mexican Jesuit priest, Miguel Pro.





# New Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	542 King St, Newtown
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	New Theatre
<b>Status:</b>	Community
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	150
<b>Days per year used:</b>	159 (44%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	133 (36%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Occasionally available for hire between shows during their season. \$80 per hour, or \$580 for 8 hours, or \$2,860 for 5 days, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.newtheatre.org.au">www.newtheatre.org.au</a>

**Notes:** In 1973, this old picture tube factory was purchased and turned into the New Theatre by the company of the same name, who were established in 1932. This was the first time they had owned their own venue, a purchase made possible by an arts grant from the Whitlam Government.



## New York Theatrette

<b>Address:</b>	The Actor's Pulse, 103 Regent St, Redfern
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	The Actor's Pulse
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	54
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.theactorspulse.com.au">www.theactorspulse.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The Actor's Pulse is a drama school based in the Meisner technique that moved into its current premises in 2000. The New York Theatrette is on level one, and was the second intimate theatre built on the site in 2007. It's used predominately for acting classes.



## NIDA Parade Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	NIDA, 215 Anzac Parade, Kensington
<b>LGA:</b>	Randwick
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	National Institute of Dramatic Art
<b>Status:</b>	Student/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	707
<b>Days per year used:</b>	118 (32%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	52 (14%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$4,700 per day, or \$5,000 Saturdays, plus GST, plus staff wages. \$18,800 per week, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.nida.edu.au">www.nida.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** Officially opened in 2002 by Mel Gibson, who contributed to the funding of the theatre, this replaced the old Parade Theatre built in the late 1960s, and is the premiere theatre for the drama school. Auditorium seating is on three levels, and the stage includes an orchestra pit, flies, and an optional thrust, making it a suitable space for theatre, musical theatre and even opera.



## NIDA Playhouse

<b>Address:</b>	NIDA, 215 Anzac Parade, Kensington
<b>LGA:</b>	Randwick
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	National Institute of Dramatic Art
<b>Status:</b>	Student/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	183
<b>Days per year used:</b>	30 (8%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	20 (5%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$1,600 per day, or \$1,700 Saturdays, plus GST, plus staff wages. \$6,400 per week, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.nida.edu.au">www.nida.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** Possibly the most familiar NIDA venue to the theatre community, the Playhouse was originally called the NIDA Theatre, and was constructed as part of the new NIDA building in 1988. The fixed seating is curved and harshly raked in an amphitheatre style for 155, with additional seating in the mezzanine.



## NIDA Space

<b>Address:</b>	NIDA, 215 Anzac Parade, Kensington
<b>LGA:</b>	Randwick
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	National Institute of Dramatic Art
<b>Status:</b>	Student/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	110
<b>Days per year used:</b>	24 (7%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	24 (7%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$950 per day, or \$1,100 Saturdays, plus GST, plus staff wages. \$3,800 per week, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.nida.edu.au">www.nida.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** Originally a rehearsal room when the new NIDA building was constructed in 1988, it was used occasionally as a performance space in the 1990s. When the extensions were added in 2002, it was renamed and dedicated to use for performance. This is the most flexible of the venues, with movable seating banks in what is essentially a black box. Mostly used for student productions, it is only available for hire for limited times throughout the year.



## NIDA Studio Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	NIDA, 215 Anzac Parade, Kensington
<b>LGA:</b>	Randwick
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	National Institute of Dramatic Art
<b>Status:</b>	Student/Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	120
<b>Days per year used:</b>	32 (9%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	28 (8%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$1,100 per day, or \$1,200 Saturdays, plus GST, plus staff wages. \$4,400 per week, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.nida.edu.au">www.nida.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** Featuring a wrap-around balcony similar to the Reginald Theatre, and a removable seating bank, this venue was opened alongside the new Parade Theatre in 2002 when the NIDA building was extended. Mostly used for student productions, it is only available for hire for limited times throughout the year. In recent years, the NIDA Independent Theatre Program was based in this space, although the program is currently suspended until further notice.



## The Old Fitz Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	The Old Fitzroy Hotel, 129 Dowling St, Woolloomooloo
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	The Old Fitzroy Hotel/Red Line Productions
<b>Status:</b>	Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	60
<b>Days per year used:</b>	251 (69%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	251 (69%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for hire outside of curated season.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.ouldfitztheatre.com">www.ouldfitztheatre.com</a>

**Notes:** Known colloquially as the Old Fitz, this British-style pub theatre was opened in 1997. It was originally managed by several theatre companies running under the collective name Theatre Hydra, considered by many to be the prototype curated season in Sydney. One of the founding companies, Tamarama Rock Surfers, eventually took over the venue and ran it for several years before they made the move to the Bondi Pavillion. The 2014-2015 financial year started out with the theatre being used essentially as a hire venue, but saw a change of management with Red Line Productions taking over in 2015, and bringing the space back to its roots as a curated venue. Their late night slot has proved a successful addition, with shorter or more experimental works playing after their main stage show has ended, giving opportunities to a greater number of independent companies to stage their work.



## Packer Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Ascham School, 188 New South Head Rd, Edgecliff
<b>LGA:</b>	Woollahra
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Ascham School
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Medium-large
<b>Capacity:</b>	750
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** Ascham School is a private girl's school, established in 1886. The Packer Theatre was built in 1988, with a donation from Kerry Packer, whose daughter attended the school. The stage has a central revolve and an orchestra pit.





# PACT Centre For Emerging Artists

<b>Address:</b>	107 Railway Parade, Erskineville
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	City of Sydney Council/PACT Centre For Emerging Artists
<b>Status:</b>	Hire/Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	150
<b>Days per year used:</b>	98 (27%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	86 (24%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$2,700 per week, plus GST. Additional charge of \$300 for use of the seating banks.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.pact.net.au">www.pact.net.au</a>

**Notes:** PACT stands for Producers, Authors, Composers and Talent, and was established in 1964 by a collective of artists in response to a government report that highlighted the dire state of Australia's performing arts, film and television industries. After residing in the Pilgrim Theatre and the corn exchange building on Sussex Street, PACT moved to its current location in 1988. In 2009, there was a change in name and mission, narrowing the focus to emerging artists in the 18-30 demographic. The name change drove away many hirers within the independent theatre sector, although the recent closing of the Tap Gallery has drawn back some of the more established artists in need of space. Movable – and removable – seating banks make this space one of the most versatile and unpredictable venues in the city.



# Pilgrim Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	262 Pitt St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Uniting Church/Australian Institute of Music
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	100
<b>Days per year used:</b>	19 (5%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	19 (5%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.aim.edu.au">www.aim.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** The Pilgrim Theatre, originally known as Pilgrim Hall, was a radio theatre built in the late 1920s. It hosted live performance during the 1940s, including international guests such as Noël Coward. It was used for broadcast for many years by the ABC and 2GB, but returned to live performance with the residency of PACT theatre in the early 1970s, and the Sydney Art Theatre from the 1990s. AIM took over the space in 2004 and their dramatic arts department (previously known as the Australian Academy of Dramatic Art) currently uses this space for classes and student performances.



## The Playhouse

<b>Address:</b>	The Actor's Pulse, 103 Regent St, Redfern
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	The Actor's Pulse
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	44
<b>Days per year used:</b>	20 (5%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	20 (5%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.theactorspulse.com.au">www.theactorspulse.com.au</a>

**Notes:** The Actor's Pulse is a drama school based in the Meisner technique that moved into its current premises in 2000. The Playhouse was built on the ground floor and opened shortly thereafter, and is used for classes for most of the year, but also occasionally for alumni productions.



## Reginald Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Seymour Centre, City Rd, Darlington
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Sydney University
<b>Status:</b>	Hire/Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	153
<b>Days per year used:</b>	267 (73%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	226 (62%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$1,900 per day (single performance only), or \$2,125 Saturdays, or \$2,975 Sundays, plus GST. \$5,900-\$6,900 per week (dependant on number of performances), plus GST. Ticketing charges apply. Discounts may be available for selected community groups.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.seymourcentre.com">www.seymourcentre.com</a>

**Notes:** Sydney businessman and philanthropist, Everest Seymour, died in 1966 and left a bequest to the city for a performing arts centre. The University of Sydney became the trustee of the bequest, and when it opened in 1975, it was called The Seymour Centre. Previously known simply as the Downstairs Theatre, the Reginald was recently renamed to take on the final name of it's benefactor, Everest Reginald York Seymour. The most important space in the Seymour Centre for independent theatre, it is now curated with the Reginald Season taking up most of the second half of the year, but available for hire at other times.



## Roslyn Packer Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	22 Hickson Rd, Millers Point
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government/Sydney Theatre Company
<b>Status:</b>	Commercial/Professional
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	896
<b>Days per year used:</b>	198 (54%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	155 (42%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$5,800 per day, or \$35,000 per week, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.roslynpackertheatre.com.au">www.roslynpackertheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Opened in 2004 as the Sydney Theatre, it was renamed the Roslyn Packer Theatre in March 2015. It is managed by Sydney Theatre Company, who are a resident company themselves along with Sydney Dance Company; the space is used for a mixture of performances by those two companies, as well as hired for commercial shows and touring productions by leading international theatre companies.



## SBW Stables Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	10 Nimrod St, Darlinghurst
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	The Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation/Griffin Theatre Company
<b>Status:</b>	Professional/Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	105
<b>Days per year used:</b>	254 (70%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	248 (68%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for hire outside of curated season.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.griffintheatre.com.au">www.griffintheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Originally a stables, the building was renovated and turned into the pivotal Nimrod Theatre in 1970. After the company left for bigger premises in 1974, the space was rented to other theatre companies under the name of The Loft, until it was purchased by writers Bob Ellis and Anne Brooksbank the following year and renamed the Stables Theatre. In 1979, Griffin Theatre Company began leasing the venue, until it was purchased by the SBW Foundation in 1986 and gifted to Griffin rent free. Specializing in new Australian writing, the Stables is the most intimate professional theatre in Sydney. In 2004, Griffin stopped hiring the theatre between shows, and began instead curating a season of independent works to run alongside its own.



## The Scots College Drama Studio

<b>Address:</b>	The Scots College, Victoria Rd, Bellevue Hill
<b>LGA:</b>	Woollahra
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	The Scots College
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	150
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** The Scots College is a Presbyterian day and boarding school for boys, which was established in 1893 and moved to the current campus at Bellevue Hill two years later. The drama studio is situated in the main building on the senior campus, which was reconstructed after a fire in 1975.



## State Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	49 Market St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Amalgamated Holdings Ltd
<b>Status:</b>	Commercial
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	1,991
<b>Days per year used:</b>	117 (32%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	*\$9,750 per day, plus staff wages. Additional charges for technical equipment, and other obligatory services.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.statetheatre.com.au">www.statetheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Opening as a cinema in 1929, this is one of the most ornate and beautiful of Sydney's theatres, and was named as one of the 15 most spectacular theatres in the world by CNN. Renovations in the early 1990s allowed for the addition of more live performance, and it is now used predominately for a mixture of cinema, stand-up comedy and musical acts. The stage isn't as wide as the other big commercial theatres in the CBD, so it's only very occasionally used for drama or musicals. Plans have been discussed to further redevelop the stage to make it more suitable for live performance, but nothing has eventuated yet.





## Studio Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Newtown High School of Performing Arts, Newman St, Newtown
<b>LGA:</b>	Sydney City
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Newtown High School of Performing Arts
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	202
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** Newtown High School of Performing Arts was founded in 1990, although there has been a school on that site, in one guise or another, since 1863. It is the only government school covered by this report with a dedicated theatre. In the early days of its life as a performing arts school, the theatre was used by outside theatre companies under the name Newtown Studio Theatre, but is now closed off to external use.



# Sydney Lyric Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Pirrama Rd, Pyrmont
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Foundation Entertainment Group
<b>Status:</b>	Commercial
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	2,050
<b>Days per year used:</b>	227 (62%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$11,500 per day, plus GST, plus staff wages.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.sydneylyric.com.au">www.sydneylyric.com.au</a>

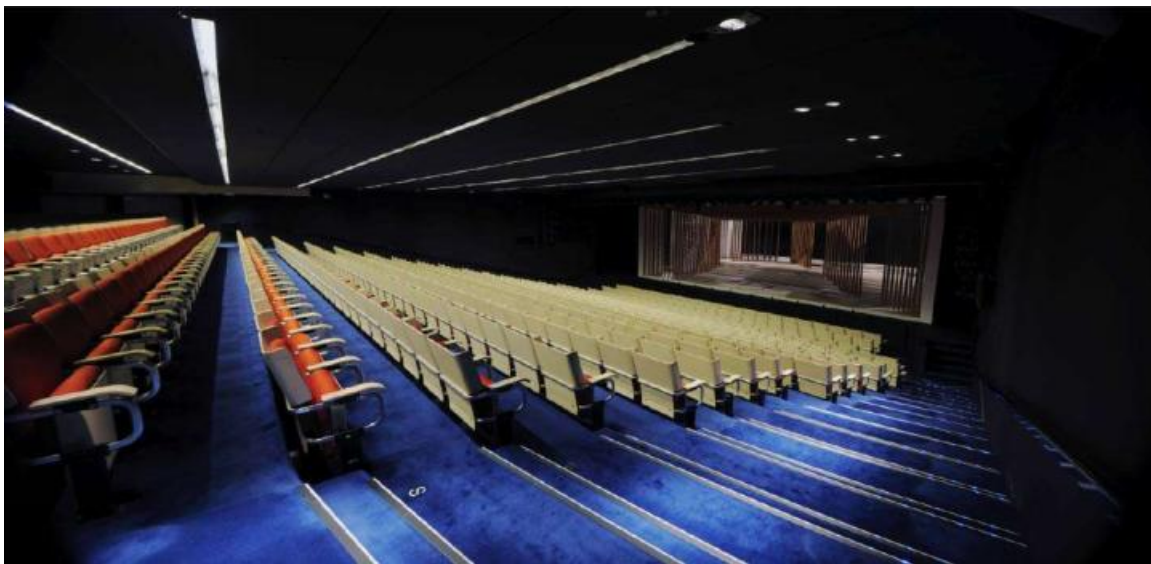
**Notes:** Built in 1997 as part of the Star City Casino, and originally named simply the Lyric Theatre, the venue has hosted many international entertainers as well as housing local musicals. In recent years, it has made a name for itself in housing world-premiere musicals such as *An Officer and a Gentleman*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *Strictly Ballroom* and *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*.



## Sydney Opera House Drama Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Sydney Opera House, Bennelong Point, 2 Macquarie St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government
<b>Status:</b>	Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Medium-large
<b>Capacity:</b>	544
<b>Days per year used:</b>	245 (67%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	193 (53%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for hire outside of curated works.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com">www.sydneyoperahouse.com</a>

**Notes:** The Sydney Opera House is one of the most iconic buildings in the world, and easily the most recognizable performance venue. This was the original drama theatre for the venue when it opened in 1973, with the Old Tote Theatre Company in residence. It housed Sydney Theatre Company when they first started in 1979, and they still use the space alongside of the Opera House's other resident companies and international guests.



## Sydney Opera House Playhouse

<b>Address:</b>	Sydney Opera House, Bennelong Point, 2 Macquarie St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government
<b>Status:</b>	Hire/Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	398
<b>Days per year used:</b>	243 (67%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	158 (43%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$2,275 per performance, or \$650 plus 12.5% box office revenue, plus staff wages. Additional charges for technical equipment, ticketing, and other obligatory services. Discounts may be available for educational and government organizations.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com">www.sydneyoperahouse.com</a>

**Notes:** The Sydney Opera House is one of the most iconic buildings in the world, and easily the most recognizable performance venue. Originally this was a smaller music venue known as the Music Room when the Opera House opened in 1973; it was briefly the cinema from 1980, and then became the venue's second theatre in 1983. Often used by resident companies such as Bell Shakespeare and the Sydney Festival, subsidized rates are also available through the Opera House Presents curated program.



## Sydney Opera House Studio

<b>Address:</b>	Sydney Opera House, Bennelong Point, 2 Macquarie St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government
<b>Status:</b>	Hire/Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	320
<b>Days per year used:</b>	242 (66%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	60 (16%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$2,110 per performance, or \$7,060 per week, plus staff wages. Additional charges for technical equipment, ticketing, and other obligatory services. Discounts may be available for educational and government organizations.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com">www.sydneyoperahouse.com</a>

**Notes:** The Sydney Opera House is one of the most iconic buildings in the world, and easily the most recognizable performance venue. Originally this was the Recording Hall when the Opera House opened in 1973, which was renamed the Boardwalk Studio in 1986. It became the Sydney Opera House Library in 1989, and was turned into another theatre performance space in 1997. Whereas the Playhouse and Drama Theatre have set seating arrangements, the studio is the more versatile space which can be used in any number of configurations, and features a mezzanine on every side for potential theatre-in-the-round use. Subsidized rates are available through the Opera House Presents curated program.



# Theatre Royal

<b>Address:</b>	108 King St, Sydney
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	The GPT Group & QIC/Ambassador Theatre Group
<b>Status:</b>	Commercial
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	1,183
<b>Days per year used:</b>	79 (22%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	52 (14%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$5,000-\$8,000 per day, or \$20,000-\$35,000 per week, plus GST, plus staff wages. Additional charges for technical equipment, electricity, and cleaning.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.theatreroyal.net.au">www.theatreroyal.net.au</a>

**Notes:** The old Theatre Royal was built in 1875 and stood for almost a hundred years until it was demolished to make way for the MLC Centre. After public outcry and pressure from construction unions, a new Theatre Royal was included in the design of the centre and opened in 1976. It has been the home to long-running musicals such as Phantom of the Opera, Cats, Rent and Jersey Boys, and played host to touring international drama such as The Hollow Crown and Driving Miss Daisy. The management of the theatre stated it was not taking on long term bookings during the term of this report due to pending redevelopments, which were announced in August by new tenants ATG, a large UK-based events company that own 40 theatres in the West End of London alone.



## Tom Mann Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	136 Chalmers St, Surry Hills
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Australian Manufacturing Workers Union/Australian Institute of Music
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	290
<b>Days per year used:</b>	4 (1%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Outside hire considered on application.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.aim.edu.au">www.aim.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** Located in the AMWU building, this theatre was built in 1976 and named in honour of the British-Australian unionist and political activist Tom Mann. A proscenium-arch style theatre, it was leased by AIM in 2013 and is now used mostly for classes and lectures, and the occasional student music performance.



## UNSW Science Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Union Rd, University of New South Wales, Kensington
<b>LGA:</b>	Randwick
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	University of New South Wales
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Large
<b>Capacity:</b>	825
<b>Days per year used:</b>	10 (3%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	5 (1%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$3,661 for 4 hours, or \$5,172 for 10 hours. Surcharges apply for public holidays. Discounts available for longer hires.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.venuesandevents.unsw.edu.au">www.venuesandevents.unsw.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** A proscenium-arch stage with split level seating, and used in the past for both UNSW and NIDA graduate productions, this theatre now predominately hosts dance and music concerts and university revues.





## UNSW Studio One

<b>Address:</b>	Gate 2, High St, University of New South Wales, Kensington
<b>LGA:</b>	Randwick
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	University of New South Wales
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	70
<b>Days per year used:</b>	51 (14%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	44 (12%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$1,400 per week, plus GST. Discounts may be available for alumni and university groups.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au">https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** This is one of several huts built in that part of the university grounds in the early 1950s; it was taken over by the drama department in 1970 and originally named the Drama Hut. Despite being one of the only remaining black box spaces in the city, it has several distinct limitations, namely the tiny dressing room, the lack of foyer, and no bathrooms on site, making outside hire problematic. The NSW Uni Theatrical Society (NUTS) are resident in the space, performing most of their productions there. It is slated for demolition, alongside of the Io Myers Studio, for the creation of a landscaped public area by 2020.



## Waverley College Drama Studio

<b>Address:</b>	Waverley College, 131 Birrell St, Waverley
<b>LGA:</b>	Waverley
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Waverley College
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	80
<b>Days per year used:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$100 per hour. Discounts available for community groups.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.waverley.nsw.edu.au">www.waverley.nsw.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** Waverley College is a Catholic boy's school, and the RJ Wallace Performing Arts Centre is located on their senior campus, boasting two theatres and a recital hall. The centre was built in 2003 to celebrate the school's centenary, and is limited by council on the number of external events it can host. This is the more intimate theatre in the centre, featuring U-shaped seating banks, and is used mostly for classes and school productions.



## Waverley College Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Waverley College, 131 Birrell St, Waverley
<b>LGA:</b>	Waverley
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Waverley College
<b>Status:</b>	Student
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	215
<b>Days per year used:</b>	20 (5%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	0 (0%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$2,480 for four hours. Discounts available for community groups.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.waverley.nsw.edu.au">www.waverley.nsw.edu.au</a>

**Notes:** Waverley College is a Catholic boy's school, and the RJ Wallace Performing Arts Centre is located on their senior campus, boasting two theatres and a recital hall. The centre was built in 2003 to celebrate the school's centenary, and is limited by council on the number of external events it can host. This theatre comes complete with orchestra pit and hosts music theatre, concerts, and intimate opera, as well as drama performances.



## Wharf 1 Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Pier 4/5, Hickson Rd, Dawes Point
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government/Sydney Theatre Company
<b>Status:</b>	Professional
<b>Size:</b>	Medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	324
<b>Days per year used:</b>	211 (58%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	211 (58%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au">www.sydneytheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Pier 4/5 in Walsh Bay was redeveloped by the NSW Government as a home for the newly established state theatre company, and performances began in early 1985. Originally named simply The Wharf Theatre, it was rechristened in 1994. Seating is in a three-sided U formation, with the ability to remove one side to create a J formation if the performance demands.



## Wharf 2 Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Pier 4/5, Hickson Rd, Dawes Point
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	NSW Government/Sydney Theatre Company
<b>Status:</b>	Professional
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	204
<b>Days per year used:</b>	74 (20%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	74 (20%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	Not available for outside hire.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au">www.sydneytheatre.com.au</a>

**Notes:** Pier 4/5 in Walsh Bay was redeveloped by the NSW Government as a home for the newly established state theatre company, and performances began in early 1985. Originally a rehearsal room, the first Artistic Director of the Sydney Theatre Company, Richard Wherrett, suggested to the architect it be soundproofed and air conditioned, paving the way for the wharf's second theatre later in 1985. It was known as the Wharf Studio Theatre until renamed in 1994.



## York Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Seymour Centre, City Rd, Darlington
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Sydney University
<b>Status:</b>	Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Medium-large
<b>Capacity:</b>	788
<b>Days per year used:</b>	222 (61%)
<b>Days used for theatre:</b>	103 (28%)
<b>Hire rates:</b>	\$7,900 per day (single performance only), or \$8,400 Saturdays, or \$10,380 Sundays, plus GST. \$36,650-\$41,950 per week (dependent on number of performances), plus GST. Ticketing charges apply. Discounts may be available for selected community groups.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.seymourcentre.com">www.seymourcentre.com</a>

**Notes:** Sydney businessman and philanthropist, Everest Seymour, died in 1966 and left a bequest to the city for a performing arts centre. The University of Sydney became the trustee of the bequest, and when it opened in 1975, it was called The Seymour Centre. Taking one of Seymour's middle names, the York is the largest theatre in the centre, with seats in a semi-circular arrangement, and was the home to the Nimrod Theatre during the 1980s.



## NEW THEATRES

### Blood Moon Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	The World Bar, 24 Bayswater Rd, Potts Point
<b>LGA:</b>	City of Sydney
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	The World Bar/Actors Anonymous Inc
<b>Status:</b>	Hire
<b>Size:</b>	Small
<b>Capacity:</b>	60
<b>Website:</b>	N/A

**Notes:** Opened September 24, 2005. The World Bar has supported independent theatre over the last few years by providing space for rehearsals, meetings, readings of plays, cabaret nights, launches, and fundraising events. Recently, in collaboration with Actors Anonymous Inc, they've opened an intimate theatre in one of their rooms on the ground floor; which, although not strictly a curated venue, is being hired only to experienced producers of theatre and cabaret.



### The Depot Theatre

<b>Address:</b>	Hut 9, Addison Road Community Centre, Addison Rd, Marrickville
<b>LGA:</b>	Marrickville
<b>Owner/Manager:</b>	Addison Road Community Centre/The Depot Theatre
<b>Status:</b>	Curated
<b>Size:</b>	Small-medium
<b>Capacity:</b>	100
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.thedepottheatre.com">www.thedepottheatre.com</a>

**Notes:** Opened July 15, 2005. The Sidetrack Theatre Company made their theatre in this hut in 1983. Century Venues took over the management in 2009, but pulled out in late 2013 after a disagreement with the ARCC, taking all the seating and equipment contributed by the community over the years, and leaving nothing more than an empty shell behind them. Subsequently, the ARCC separately leased out the office and bar areas as storage space, but a contract was signed with The Depot Theatre last year for the use of the main hall as their combined theatre, bar and workshop space.



## Kings Cross Theatre

**Address:** Kings Cross Hotel, 244-248 William St, Potts Point  
**LGA:** City of Sydney  
**Owner/Manager:** Kings Cross Hotel/bAKEHOUSE Theatre Company  
**Status:** Curated  
**Size:** Small  
**Capacity:** 90  
**Website:** [www.kingsxtheatre.com](http://www.kingsxtheatre.com)

**Notes:** Opened November 11, 2015. Previously used as the band room on level two of the hotel, the space was utilized as a theatre during the Sydney Fringe, and subsequently a deal was struck between the hotel and the presenting company bAKEHOUSE to renovate the space into an intimate traverse-style theatre venue.



## Millie Phillips Theatre

**Address:** Emanuel School, 20 Stanley St, Randwick  
**LGA:** Randwick  
**Owner/Manager:** Emanuel School  
**Status:** Student  
**Size:** Small-medium  
**Capacity:** 200  
**Website:** N/A

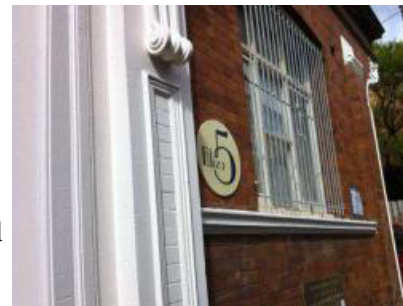


**Notes:** Opened August 23, 2015. Emanuel is a Jewish school, and the Millie Phillips Theatre is part of a new development officially opened by Malcolm Turnbull. Named after philanthropist Millie Phillips, it's currently used for school productions.

## Old 505 Theatre

**Address:** 5 Eliza St, Newtown  
**LGA:** Marrickville  
**Owner/Manager:** Newtown School of Arts/Old 505 Theatre  
**Status:** Curated  
**Size:** Small-medium  
**Capacity:** 70  
**Website:** [www.old505theatre.com](http://www.old505theatre.com)

**Notes:** Opened November 23, 2015. Having grown out of their old premises in Hibernian house, the Old 505 team have moved to a new stage in the ballroom of the Newtown School of Arts building, just off King Street, which was built in 1916.





## OTHER NOTABLE VENUES

The recently demolished **Sydney Entertainment Centre** at Darling Harbour seated over 13,000 and despite holding a large-scale musical from time to time, was essentially a concert venue for big international guests: it is reportedly to be replaced by the nearby ICC Sydney Theatre, which is slated to seat 9,000. The **City Recital Hall** at Angel Place occasionally sees an opera, though as the name suggests is designed predominately for music; and the **Joan Sutherland Theatre** is the designated opera venue at the Sydney Opera House. Despite their names, the **Metro Theatre** and **Factory Theatre** are set up as music venues: the latter has a few small rooms within the building which are utilized occasionally, particularly during the Sydney Fringe, but the only one that is a dedicated theatre is the Fuse Box, which is listed above. **Slide** is a dedicated cabaret venue. **The Vanguard** and the **Red Rattler** are great intimate music and cabaret venues, but despite the occasional show performed there, neither particularly suit the theatrical medium, with limited sightlines, lack of wing space, and – in the latter – a management style favouring short-term bookings and one-off events. The **Bon Marche Studio** at UTS was set up chiefly as a recording stage, but retractable seating gives it the capability for live performance; unfortunately, hire rates are extremely high, and even the UTS theatrical societies are now denied subsidies, meaning that for the last few years they have been forced to perform in external venues and classrooms. The Australian Institute of Music has several venues, including the historic **Australian Hall**, which is sometimes used as a theatre for graduate productions, though it is essentially a hall that has been shoehorned into theatrical use. There are many such halls, usually town halls, that are occasionally used for performance – mostly out of desperation, given the usually unsuitable staging and appalling acoustics of these spaces (see page 73). The **Old Chapel Drama Theatre** at Newington College was one of the few private school theatres that occasionally hired to other theatre companies, but it has now been partly demolished; a new drama centre is planned for the site. **107 Projects** was not set up as a theatre and is geared towards readings and works-in-development, although it has seen a greater influx of productions since the demise of the Tap Gallery forced independent producers to find alternative spaces within a similar budget. There are a few pubs with function rooms occasionally used for plays, most notably the **Exchange Hotel** in Balmain – which has proven popular in a greatly under-represented area – and the **Roxbury Hotel** in Glebe – which has been, at times, a great supporter of readings and comedy nights – but the fortunes of their theatre programming continues to fluctuate with changes of, and within, management. Indeed, the former is exchanging management early this year and, as a result, the future of theatre there looks pretty dim; likewise, the latter's change of management late last year spelled the end for several groups utilising the space. Some business centres and corporations feature theatrettes in their buildings, used for conferences and demonstrations, and even some of these are on occasion being used by canny producers. Foyers can sometimes house their own performances, even alongside main stage shows, notably the foyer stage at the King Street Theatre which I helped set up for a season of late-night horror when it was still the Newtown Theatre back in 2009, but without that very specialized style of theatre it was designed for, it has now been relegated to the

occasional music and cabaret event. Use of empty or abandoned spaces, despite success and growing popularity in Europe, is only now starting to get a look in, with the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority's program of **Rocks Pop-up** productions gaining momentum. While it's not within the scope of this report to profile outdoor venues, there are some lovely outdoor spaces and parks which companies use from time to time, most notably the **Botanical Gardens**, **Centennial Park**, and **The Coal Loader** in Waverton. The **Hub Theatre** in Newtown has stood abandoned for more than a decade, but recent renovations are promising; the “**Old**” **Old 505** venue at Hibernian House in Surry Hills is still under lease but currently unused since the Old 505 team moved to Newtown, and it is certainly hoped that it may reopen for some theatrical use in the near future; and we look ahead hopeful that more spaces will be created with the NSW Government's redevelopment of **Pier 2/3** at Dawes Point.

## SUMMARY

There are 65 theatres in the Sydney theatre scene, and although that might look a lot on paper, the very fact that all the theatres in a world class city like Sydney could be this easily quantified, is a sign of their dearth. That this number should include professional, independent, community, and student theatres, including private venues in schools, obscure venues, theatres only just launched, venues marked for closure, spaces temporarily closed, theatres that are more frequently used as lecture halls or exhibition spaces, theatres that are little more than semi-converted classrooms or function rooms, and venues that many in the industry would question being classed as theatres at all (whenever there was doubt, I erred towards inclusion), make this number shrink further into inadequacy. And even among those that are unquestionably theatres, we have problematic venues lacking important facilities like foyers or on-site bathrooms or backstage areas, theatres with stage obstructions, theatres with difficult access, theatres directly under the flightpath, theatres built in an antiquated style<sup>1</sup>, theatres that are rarely open and impossible to get in contact with, and theatres with managements so difficult they're rarely hired by the same group twice. Included in this list are the commercial theatres that are essentially too big to use for non-musical theatre, multi-arts venues that cater for several art forms, and venues that are currently being used for performance mediums other than theatre – indeed, 51% of the venues listed are used more frequently for other styles of performance, or for purposes other than theatre, and 12% are not open to the public at all. Add in the current high rates of hire and it's remarkable there's as much theatre happening in this town as there is.

The theatre that is happening is predominately artist driven, in spite of the clear lack of infrastructure to support it, and is no doubt only a fraction of what it could be if there were support. I circulated an online poll among independent producers and discovered that 91% have had to postpone or cancel a show due to the lack of a suitable venue; 55% have had to make creative compromises because of the shortage; and 64% of producers have cited finding an affordable venue as the single biggest problem they face in putting on a show.

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1. In the first half of the twentieth century, many of the venues built were a hangover from the nineteenth century predilection for picture-box theatres – with proscenium arches and seating on the floor – a style essentially made defunct, since it's lacking in the intimacy now required to lure audiences away from those other picture boxes in their living rooms. Often these spaces are also difficult to perform in due to inferior acoustics, and most producers give them a wide berth. In the latter half of the century, we saw a welcome and necessary return to the classic Greek style of theatre – the amphitheatre model, with raked seating and a flat performance space. Still, our councils largely ignore input from theatre practitioners in the design of new venues, and this has sometimes led to such antiquated elements being incorporated into modern theatres, with predictably disastrous results. We have more than a dozen venues of this nature in Sydney, and several more with elements of this design, most of which are great old houses with a lot of history that should be protected and kept alive, but since they won't suit the majority of modern theatre productions we must also look to the future in our theatre design and ensure there are enough venues that provide a modern performance aspect.

It is vitally important, particularly when they're scarce, that performance venues are used for performance. They're too precious to waste on anything else. Theatres aren't for readings, rehearsals, workshops, meetings, classes, conferences, exhibitions, or private functions – there are plenty of other places where these things could happen. Theatres should be for theatre.

This summary aims to show that our theatres are, to a large extent, *not* being used for theatre, as well as detail some of the other key areas in which our theatre scene is failing, and conclude with recommendations for the future.

## USE

What leaps out at me immediately upon reviewing the profiles is the incredibly low levels of use. **Our theatres are used for performance only 29% of the year.** The figures are less encouraging still when excluding other forms of performance, bringing that figure down to an incredibly dismal **18% use for theatre** for the year. A lot of school venues end up with what appears to be no use at all: naturally, they're used for school performances, but these don't show up in the figures unless they're open to the general public; but even when removing the schools entirely, the figures don't improve much, only to 35% use and 21% for theatre. Given that many in the theatre community are struggling to secure venues, and given how much theatre is increasingly taking place outside of traditional theatres, it seems the only conclusion to be drawn is that our theatres are not supporting our artists in creating theatre.

I've had the impression for a long time that the bureaucrats running our venues would prefer them to remain dark half the year and charge twice the amount, rather than oversee a thriving artistic endeavour at reasonable rates. These figures not only prove this grim assumption, but they show the reality is actually worse still. Our hire venues were open for performance only 41% of the year, and only 20% of the year for theatre: in other words, **more than half our hire theatres' use falls to kinds of performance other than theatre**, an indication that perhaps our theatre managers are looking towards non-theatrical hirers with lower overheads – like comedy and music – so that they can increase their revenue, rather than support the industry their venue is built for. Obviously hire venues are likely to have lower percentages of use than a curated venue, as they are reliant on bookings; but even so, with a theatre community desperate for spaces, any venue that doesn't reach even 50% general use must question whether its rates are too high. Given the demand, a significant lowering of rates might not only bring theatre back to our theatres, but actually increase income.

It's not unreasonable for a theatre to be closed one night a week – particularly those run by small teams – as well as over Christmas, and for a couple of days between shows for the bump out and in, perhaps bringing the figures down to around 75% use. But given that the venue with the highest figures was only at 77% and 76% respectively, one wonders if even our busiest venues are being used to their full potential.

It was bad enough that one of Sydney's most historic venues, the Fig Tree Theatre, was taken out of the hands of university faculties and removed further still from the arts industry by being *given to an organization that handles student accommodation*, but that it was actually **closed for more than two months before anyone noticed** is as great an

indictment of the underutilization of our venues as any figure I can print in these pages. It was only through my own personal enquiries in completing this report that I discovered the fact, and I am yet to see a single article on the closure in the press.

## GOVERNMENT AREA

Out of the 65 theatres covered in this report, as expected the City of Sydney has the most with 40 theatres, then Randwick with 9, Marrickville with 5, Waverley with 4, North Sydney and Woollahra with 3 each, and Leichhardt particularly underrepresented with only 1. Given that all three of Woollahra's theatres are in private schools and not open to the public, Woollahra must join Leichhardt as the two councils least representing theatre in Sydney.

Balmain has a vibrant theatre-going community, and yet Leichhardt council shut down the only theatre in this suburb – the Crypt Theatre at the Cat and Fiddle Hotel – several years ago. The only venue remaining in the municipal area is the Italian Forum, and yet council has railroaded the sale of this incredible asset into the hands of a non-theatrical owner<sup>1</sup>, even at the probable consequence of evicting the theatrical lessees, Actors Centre Australia.

Woollahra, in addition to making up most of the prime minister's own federal seat, is one of the wealthiest councils in Australia, and home to the wealthiest residents in the country. In fact, it's so wealthy, that *every single suburb* within the council boundary was named amongst the top 20 of Australia's wealthiest suburbs for 2015<sup>2</sup>. It is, therefore, an outrage that Woollahra has absolutely no theatres open to the public. It proves that while wealth may appreciate the arts, it won't tolerate it in its own backyard.

A great example of this is currently taking place nearby at St Catherine's School in Waverley, which is including a 500 seat theatre in its new \$65M Research, Performing arts and Aquatic Centre. On their website, they state: “our original plan was to allow wide community use of our facilities due to the shortage of auditorium spaces in our area”, but after eliciting donations from the local community to build the centre, they “reluctantly decided not to allow additional non-school community use of the auditorium due to concerns from our local community about traffic associated with its use”<sup>3</sup>. Whether the reason or the excuse, this is a line so old that you may note it is identical to the one used by wealthy residents to close down the Blackfriars in Elizabethan London; and one can only wonder how many members of the local community donated in the mistaken belief that the theatre would be made available to the public.

But no council can afford to be complacent, since an unanimous 100% of independent producers said they didn't feel their work was in any way supported by their local council, nor the state or federal governments. At present, the most exciting and supportive arts environment is not at all in central Sydney, but to the north west, where

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1 City News 13/5/14

<http://www.mynewtown.com.au/the-italian-stand-off/90650>

2 Business Insider 7/5/15

<http://www.businessinsider.com.au/the-25-richest-suburbs-in-australia-2015-5#25>

3 St Catherine's website, January 2016

<https://www.stcatherines.nsw.edu.au/rpac/donation/Pages/FAQs.aspx>

the Hills Shire Council is actually drawing central audiences away with its festivals, cultural attractions, and live theatre in non-traditional venues.

It is important in any city that there are concentrated areas of theatrical activity, like the West End in London, or Broadway in New York. There are two theatrical hubs providing a great deal of – mostly independent – activity in Sydney theatre: King Street and Kings Cross. To be sure, the venues are not numerous or concentrated enough to constitute a true theatre district, but they come as close as Sydney gets.

The first of these hubs is on King Street in Newtown, which starts at the Seymour Centre at the City Road end, and extends not only to the end of King Street, but splits down Enmore and Erskinville Roads; the latter takes in the several theatres sprinkled about the suburbs of Potts Point, Woollahroomooloo and Darlinghurst that form this iconic junction. Both of these precincts have dwindled in recent years, with some of their most important venues closing or changing use, but with our newest theatres springing up in the very hearts of these areas, we might potentially be on the cusp of a resurgence.

And there is the potential for a third hub, by freeing up the licensing “so that little nooks and crannies can become alive with possibility”<sup>1</sup>, and join the professional venues dotted along Sydney harbour, from the Opera House to Barangaroo.

## STATUS

There is a severe shortage of hire theatres, with only 6 theatres dedicated to year-round hire<sup>2</sup>. The last decade has seen a gradual increase in curated venues, but since it is chiefly the hire venues that have made the move to curatorial seasons and policies, we have consequently seen a decrease in this area. While the rise of curation is important and must be applauded, that it should come at the cost of hire venues is most unfortunate.

Whilst independent producers are split down the middle as to whether they prefer to program their works in a curated season or not, it is telling that 67% stated that they find it hard getting into these seasons, giving reasons as varied as creative difference and lead time, but for the majority of respondents the biggest stumbling block was not being socially acquainted with the judging panel. And when producers are knocked back from these notoriously insular programs, as they mostly are given that there are usually dozens if not hundreds of submissions, there's hardly any hire venues around in which they can then stage their work on their own, with an overwhelming 100% of respondents agreeing that there is not enough choice of hire venues in Sydney.

One of the biggest surprises for me in putting this report together is the sheer volume of student venues, particularly those in private schools which the vast majority of people in the theatre industry would be completely unaware of. In fact, there are quite a few more student theatres than any other kind of theatre – 27 in all, which accounts for almost half the theatres in Sydney.

With a small professional theatre sector, being fed by an independent sector that is

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1 SMH 9/3/11  
<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/walsh-bay-could-be-the-beating-art-of-a-revived-city-20110308-1bmoa.html>

2 Excluding commercial venues

suffering from a lack of venues, one wonders exactly what kind of industry we are preparing these students for. Our high schools, universities and drama schools are perhaps inadvertently giving their students a false impression of the existing theatre scene, preparing them for an industry that isn't nearly as well resourced; and, for the most part, are not supporting alumni after they graduate, with so many closed off to external hire. Only 18% of respondents could say they had been supported by their alma mater with subsidised venue or rehearsal hire, and I know I was greatly disappointed when I tried to hire the hall of my high school for a show, only to be met with the same dismissiveness and obfuscation I'd received from every other venue I'd approached.

## SIZE

Although there seems to be a reasonable spread of theatres of different sizes, in reality there is a shortage of small venues available to the independent sector, particularly those available for hire. Out of the 13 small venues listed: 7 are student venues (5 of which are not available for hire, 1 with strict limitations on use, and 1 a problematic venue marked for closure); 1 is a community venue unavailable for hire, also marked for closure; 1 is limited to professional use; and 2 are extremely competitive curated venues unavailable for hire; leaving only the 2 new venues that have opened up in Kings Cross as a response to the vacuum left by the closure of the Tap Gallery theatres. Of these two new spaces, one is a fledgeling curated venue that has not yet taken submissions from the industry, the other a hire venue that nonetheless has a vetting process that requires hiring producers to have experience behind them. In other words, if I just wanted to hire a small venue to put on a show, I may well be unable to do so. For a producer starting out in the industry, they will find **there are no small venues for hire in Sydney** in which to make a start.

Having those few curated venues is important for the industry, but they cannot provide nearly enough space for the amount of intimate theatre that could and would and should be taking place in Sydney. What most people outside of the industry don't understand, is that one doesn't just hire a venue when putting on a show – the venue plays an integral creative choice in the production, as much as the costumes, or casting, or the decision to include music. A producer wishing to put on an nineteenth century drama, for example, may not find the necessary atmosphere in a contemporary pub theatre space. More choice is needed, and more small venues are required.

## HIRE RATES

Only a few years ago, there were several independent theatres that would cost no more than \$2000 per week, inclusive of all costs, but since the closing of the Tap Gallery spaces there is no longer anything in this price bracket. This means that the small and fledgling companies are being hit hardest, and it's vital that we're not discouraging new practitioners from taking part in the industry.

The rates for almost every venue has risen in the last few years, some quite dramatically. The Reginald Theatre was \$3,500-5,500 per week in 2011 and within only four years has risen to \$5,900-6,900. The Bondi Pavilion Theatre was minimum \$1300

per week in 2013, then minimum \$2200 per week in 2014, then not available for hire at all in 2015. For some venues the rate hikes have been more subtle; ie, the base rate staying much the same, but with conditional percentages on door takings, extra fees, or higher additional charges taking the overall cost further out of reach of the average theatre producer.

The fees and charges for most theatres are now so complicated, with so many ifs ands or buts, that from a producer perspective it's becoming increasingly difficult to accurately budget for a show. Staffing and additional charges at the opera house will generally range from \$7,000 to \$12,000 per day, on top of the base hire rates. For the State Theatre, once staffing and other charges are included, hire for the evening will most likely total somewhere between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

Additional costs are often so broad as to leave producers in fear of an unknown quantity. I looked at hiring one of the NIDA theatres a few years ago, which was pushing my budget to the limit, but vagaries like “total staff costs are estimations only and are subject to change” and potential *employer responsibilities* outsourced to the hirer, such as “the hirer will be required to pay for taxi fares for all crew who worked late” made hire too much of a risk. I try to avoid hiring theatres with variable charges, and so too do 64% of independent producers.

Too often there are hidden costs: the cleaning, or electricity costs that management neglected to mention; ticketing fees, or public holiday surcharges that weren't listed or only implied in the contract; the nasty last minute surprise that GST wasn't inclusive, or that the management put on an extra staff member at their own discretion – all of which is even more likely to appear, and difficult to get out of, if the venue handles ticketing. Poor and powerless artists are often seen as targets to be taken advantage of or, perhaps worse still, ignorantly treated as commercial hirers with cash to burn. I once hired a council venue, and was required to pay wages for one technician. He brought his girlfriend along to sit with him in the lighting box, which I thought nothing of at the time, until at the end of the run I found an extra \$1500 in staff wages tacked on to my charges. I fought this and eventually won, but there are not many as willing to fight for their rights as I am, and it's incidents like this that illustrate why there is a high burn-out rate among producers.

Some theatres are actually charging more for their space than can be feasibly made back. The Downstairs Belvoir used to be one of the most sought after stages in independent theatre, until a policy was made in 2011 to only hire the space to productions paying award wages. How could any company paying award wages be expected to break even, with hire rates that high, the production budget still to consider, and only eighty seats to sell? (Of course, perhaps that's the point, and Belvoir's plan all along was to sell to functions and corporate events; after all, the only photo I could find for the space was from their website, and features a dining table in the playing area.)

It's exasperating that, while so much public money and support should have gone into keeping venues like the Independent Theatre alive, the hire rates are kept above what the vast majority of – ironically – *independent theatre* companies can afford, meaning the theatre stays dark most of the year. And it's the public that chiefly misses out.



But the greatest subsidizers of the arts are the artists themselves<sup>1</sup>, the actors and directors that want to produce a show, many of whom are living on, or below, the poverty line<sup>2</sup>. Every producer polled has put their own money into a show at some point, with one in four losing so much at some stage that they've had to shoulder a significant financial burden thereafter. Unfortunately, now that hire rates have risen beyond the reasonable, and there's an increasing lack of transparency in what's being paid for, those artists are finding it increasingly hard to subsidize our theatre, and the venues they require to do it are being taken further and further out of their grasp.

## ACCESS & RED TAPE

Hire rates aren't the only obstacle standing in the way of our theatres being used by the theatre community.

Whether intended or not, the lack of information, cooperation and response from theatre managements is a way of gradually prying venues away from the theatre community. There are several venues whose management bears no relation to the arts industry and feels no compunction to serve the arts in its policies or hire rates, but even among those firmly entrenched within the industry, there are those theatre managements that are actively discouraging hire of their facilities, and effectively discouraging participation in the arts. Of course, the unkindest cut of all is when theatre practitioners do it to each other: with the Belvoir's restrictions on their downstairs theatre, the insularity of the Mantouridion Theatre, and Monkey Baa's exorbitant hire rates on its gifted space standing as great examples of a struggling industry cutting off its own nose to spite its face.

Furthermore, if a theatre is bequested to the city or community, as is the case with the Seymour Centre, shouldn't its operations be more open and answerable to the people? Shouldn't its theatres be reserved for what they were intended in Seymour's original bequest? Instead, a poster currently hangs outside the venue advertising its availability for corporate hire.

Schools were not only the venues least open to the public for performance, they were the least open to enquiry, and I found them quite the hardest to glean information from. Given that 40% of the income for independent schools comes from public funding – and more still for Catholic schools – it seems only fair that their facilities should be made available to the public accordingly; if not to our underresourced arts community, then at least to the underresourced drama departments of our public schools.

One of the best examples I have seen of schools and the arts community working together is at the Star of the Sea Theatre at the Stella Maris girls' school in Manly. The school is perfectly able to manage its own schedule of events whilst also opening up to no less than three resident theatre companies: the youth theatre company Rough Hewn

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1 The Guardian 8/1/15  
<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/jan/08/we-cant-afford-not-to-pay-our-theatre-artists-stage-directors-uk>

2 news.com.au 3/8/15  
<http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/tv/most-aussie-actors-even-on-tv-right-now-struggle-to-make-ends-meet-and-live-close-to-poverty/story-e6frfmyi-1227467034440>

Theatre Troupe, the independent theatre company Factory Space Theatre, and the Manly Musical Society. In return for these companies having a base of operations and a set number of performance times throughout the year, they give opportunities to the school's students to work alongside experienced arts practitioners. It would be encouraging, and a great win for all involved, to see more deals struck along these lines.

Of course, it was aspects of the Development Application that did for the Tap Gallery, and it is also a DA issue that is stopping many student venues from opening up to outside use, or opening up further. I was told by the venue managers of several student theatres that even if they wanted to open up for outside hire, they could not, for this reason. DAs may be a necessity, but if they are not helping serve the community in this instance, then perhaps they need to be amended so that they do?

Obstructions, bureaucracy and red tape are on the rise, and continue to entangle and bring down many young and established theatre companies alike, and will often smother a show before it even reaches the stage.

Public liability insurance isn't required to own a handgun in NSW, yet a group of artists can't even get together to rehearse in a council hall without it, for fear of assault with a deadly soliloquy I suppose. Where our governments have failed to provide relief from prohibitive insurance costs, some frustrated artists took the issue into their own hands and started Duck for Cover, a not-for-profit agency providing umbrella insurance cover for its members. Since they were established in 1998, they have garnered over 10,000 members, an indication of how desperately help was needed in this area. But even this outlet only reduces costs, with 73% of producers still citing insurance as a major financial burden on the budget of a show: more long term solutions are necessary.

Coming from a regional area where free rehearsal venues could always be found within community-minded clubs, businesses, and council buildings, I have been constantly frustrated by the lack of community spirit in the city. Sydney councils rarely have free or even subsidized spaces available, and when they do, access is almost always limited to incorporated groups. This rules out the majority of theatre companies, since they are most frequently run by one or two people, funding the enterprise themselves, and often created on an ad hoc basis that requires this freedom for its existence. Given that the cost of a rehearsal venue is often the second biggest cost for an independent production after venue hire – and with many producers citing this as one of their biggest challenges in putting on a show – this is an area in which councils might make small changes that would reap great benefits, and better support the arts in their community.

Finally, access to publicity is becoming more and more difficult, and the connections linking the artist and the public diminishing, with the downsizing of print media and the rise of the “advertorial”. The days of looking up the SMH listing guide to choose what show to see is long gone, as prices rose beyond what the industry could afford, and subsequently the column lost both its customers and audience. Now, artists are relying more and more on social media, effectively marketing predominately to their own limited contacts. There is a clear interest from the general public in independent theatre, but most people have no idea how to access information about it, and likewise the artists are struggling to make their presence known.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **For venue managers:**

- Hire rates should be scrutinized across the industry and lowered where possible.
- Hire rates should be made transparent, simple and accessible, and all charges identified up front.
- Variable hire rates should be reduced, with employer responsibilities retained by the employer.
- Theatre performance should be given priority in our theatres.

### **For schools:**

- School venues should be made open and accessible to the community, and deals with independent theatre groups (as in the case of Stella Maris in Manly) considered for the benefit of both parties.
- Alumni should be given greater support, particularly from arts and theatre based courses, strengthening both the appeal of the institution and the industry it feeds into.

### **For arts practitioners:**

- Theatre companies should communicate and work together to pool resources (as in the recent case of STC and Bell Shakespeare<sup>1</sup>), including theatres and rehearsal spaces.
- Those in the industry should throw their support behind theatres that face closure, since public outcry has proven time and again to be the most powerful tool in keeping venues alive.

### **For government:**

- All theatres that face closure, now or in the future, should be protected: including a reversal on the imminent closure of the Archway 1 Theatre.
- All levels of government and funding bodies should look at increasing the number of available venues for theatre in Sydney.
- Support should be increased for non-traditional theatre spaces and pop-up venues.
- City of Sydney council should look at options to encourage more venues in the theatre hubs in Kings Cross and on the harbour between the Sydney Opera House and Barangaroo, as well as working with Marrickville council to build up the theatre hub along King Street.
- Leichhardt and Woollahra councils should implement policies to begin supporting theatre and the arts in their area.
- Development Applications for theatre spaces should be reviewed to ensure they are best serving the community and the theatre industry.

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<sup>1</sup> SMH 3/1/16

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/stage/sydney-theatre-company-bell-shakespeare-extends-helping-hand-to-struggling-theatre-sector-20160103-glnrm1.html>

- Long term solutions should be found for the issue of public liability insurance.
- Local councils should review policies on the use of halls and facilities for rehearsal by small groups, in particular the necessity for incorporation.
- All levels of government and funding bodies should look at ways of assisting independent theatre with publicity, and helping to reconnect artists with the general public; for example, councils should review their current policies on carrying arts flyers in libraries (most councils currently don't consider any event with a cover charge as a community event), and the potential for free noticeboard, print and online marketing opportunities.
- Parking limits around theatres should be scrutinized with a view to lifting restrictions after 6pm: many theatres, which feature approximately three hour performances, are currently surrounded by two hour limits, and lack drop-off zones for taxis.
- Our youth theatres and youth theatre companies – that, while situated mostly outside central Sydney, feed into its independent sector – should be supported, and should be wholeheartedly by any society that values its young people<sup>1</sup>.
- Financial investment in theatre should be increased. NSW Trade and Investment recognized the importance of the independent theatre sector in its Theatre Sector Snapshot 2013<sup>2</sup>, although it also identified that sustainability in the sector is a significant weakness for the industry because the “costs of developing and producing work are high” and due to the “lack of support mechanisms” available. Without the independent scene that provides the bulk of theatrical work<sup>3</sup>, the professional scene that it feeds into would wither. It is vital that professional theatre is financially supported, and it is equally important that independent theatre is not overlooked.

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1 ABC 21/12/15

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-21/the-government27s-cuts-to-youth-arts-is-a-blow-to-australia/7045146>

2 NSW Trade & Investment

<http://tnn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2013-Theatre-Sector-Snapshot.pdf>

3 Crikey 18/9/15

[http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/09/18/brandis-is-wrong-small-arts-orgs-deliver-much-greater-bang-for-govt-buck/?wpmw\\_switcher=mobile](http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/09/18/brandis-is-wrong-small-arts-orgs-deliver-much-greater-bang-for-govt-buck/?wpmw_switcher=mobile)