



Free Theatre Christchurch

Bookings/Info: www.freetheatre.org.nz • Email: info@freetheatre.org.nz

The Gym, The Arts Centre, Worcester Boulevard

+64-21-025-61384 • PO Box 2736, Christchurch 8013, New Zealand

19 June 2018

Dear Arts Centre Trustees

We are writing to ask you to reconsider your decision regarding Free Theatre and The Gym. We appreciate the Arts Centre has a challenge to meet the restoration costs of the entire site (\$35 mil for outstanding restoration). However, expelling a key arts organization that has spent considerable time, money and goodwill establishing a high-quality arts space and innovative programme in the city is counterproductive. It is this kind of facility and activity that should be used to inspire investment in the Arts Centre as a key, distinct site in the city's regeneration.

Over three years, this venue has become a much-loved space for the arts, providing excellent facilities within a beautiful and inspiring building. The dimensions of the building and facilities including the light, sound and curtains combine to create an intimate venue that is unique in the city. The addition of bar facilities and the ability to be flexible means a range of users have enjoyed the space. It excites people about the future of the Arts Centre and the city.

It is wasteful in the current environment of Christchurch to strip this beautiful space of the facilities that allow it to be a performance and event space for a range of users. The rationale that festivals and events would sooner hire in equipment is incorrect. Without the availability of the current high-quality facilities in terms of light, sound, blacks and bar, this venue loses its appeal. It should also not be underestimated how appealing it is to work in a venue with a resident company that has proven expertise to maximize the potential of the space. Free Theatre have proven a successful host for numerous events and festivals.

The proposed partnership between the Arts Centre and Free Theatre sounds excellent with the Arts Centre arranging hires and Free Theatre able to continue to present the work and education opportunities that maximize the benefits of this space. If revenue from corporate and private events can help lower the costs of hire for arts organizations and festivals, this space can be a key site within the wider Arts Centre for the contemporary arts in accordance with the Arts Centre trust deed.

Free Theatre have worked extremely hard to provide something that can be enjoyed by the wider city. This respected company is one of the country's longest running arts organisations and has been a consistent and energetic presence in the Arts Centre since 1982. We hope you can reconsider your position and work towards an agreement that will allow this company and this space to continue in the Arts Centre.

Signed,

Nigel and Jilly Taylor, *Marlborough*

Niki Mirfin, *St Albans*

Mary Cronin, *Cashmere*

Jess Aspinwall

Gijs Ochsendorf

Marjolein Appel

Hamish and Jen Evans

Ian Loughran

Tom Shand, *Christchurch*

Deane Simmonds

Carli Go

Giarne Harrison, *Christchurch*

Ursula Torres Mankiewicz, *Wellington*

Peter Porteous

Dr Sharon Mazer, *Associate Professor Theatre & Performance Studies, AUT*

Judy Derrick

Tai Huata, *Principal, Hapuku School, Kaikoura*

Di Trower

Dr Cindy Zeiher, *College of Arts, School of Political Sciences, UC*

Netta Egoz, *Lyttelton*

Ben Dodd

Tara Martin

Alastair Gray

Katie Earle

Waipounamu Te Karu

Gabriel Kwekou, *Lyttelton*

Tony Fallon

Ben Loader, *Rolleston*

Sarah Caughley, *Christchurch*

Lauro Lee In-Jung Shore, *Richmond*

Richard Sutton, *Richmond*

Kirsty Boyd-Wilson

Massimiliano Capocaccia, *Christchurch*

Aliesha Gabrielle, *Christchurch*

Rachel Pachel, *Christchurch*

Aaron Hapuku

Rosaria Ferguson, *Christchurch Event Producer*

Jazmynn Hodder-Swain, *Christchurch*
Josiah Morgan, *Christchurch*
Olivia Murray, *Christchurch*
Mark and Angie Dalley, *Sumner*
Makimaki Pai
Dr Karyn Stewart
Amanda Peters, *Papanui*
Cathy Solomon
Lhizz Browne, *Dunedin*
Peter Müller, *Christchurch*
Jodi Wright
Matthew Joils
Josh Naus
Bruce Burnett, *Coopers Creek, Oxford*
Rachel O'Brien, *Christchurch*
Tyler Brailey
James McCabe, *UK*
Andrew David Clarke
Elise Harris
Brigid Kelly, *Central Christchurch*
Andrew Paul Wood
Hilary Mercer
Jillian Woods
Anna Sedcole
Bette Cosgrove, *Wellington*
Jo Hartley
Michelle and Aidan De Faoite
Nathaniel Lees, *Wellington*
Nica Nel
Judith Hart
Andrew Hunt
Anna Leese Guidi
Jodie O'Neill
Ben Woods
Kahurangi Bronsson-George
Olivia Wilson
Mark and Barbara Mulholland
Amiria Perez
Chloe Thompson
Hope Wilson, *Christchurch*
Stacey Harris
Keri Naus
Heather Webb, *Christchurch*
Georgina Tarren-Sweeney
Maria Webb
Linley-Jane Bullen
Andy Robertson

Harry Knight
Kim Knight
Chris Lynch
Jo Scott
Olivia Webb
Chloë Dear
Angela Clifford
Andrea Brigden
Sampson Knight
Helen Tullet
Morehu Solomon
Liz Bryce
Marion Jean Fairbrass, *Edgeward, Christchurch*
Louise McLean, *Spreydon*
Joseph McCallum
Camille Coux
Shirley and Roger Horrocks
Julianne Munro
Kathryn Jordan-McGrath
Anita Clark
Charles Heywood
Dr Suzanne Little, *Theatre Studies, University of Otago*
Nick Stevenson, *Event Director, Aotearoa Surf Film Festival*
Nansi Thompson, *Pukekohe, Auckland*
Rachael Welfare, *Director, Life in Vacant Spaces (LiVS)*
Lisa Tui Jonathan, *Avonside, Christchurch*
Andrew Catanach
Audrey Lustig
Rebecca Reij
Gerald Fitzgerald
Gareth McMillan, *Director, Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust*
Di Lucas
Sarah and Martin Aspinwall, *Canterbury Cheesemongers*
Inez Grim
Valda and Brian Woods, *Sydenham, Christchurch*
Sue Hassell
Lizzie Thompson
Colin Goodrich, *Christchurch*
Michael Grimshaw, *Associate Professor, Sociology, UC*
Stephanie Owens
Jenny Ritchie
Heather McCurdy
Belinda Meares, *InterPlay New Zealand*
Deirdre Johns
Jason Ware
John Freeman-Moir
Elliw Alwen

Frank Lad, *Maths Department, UC*
Jessica Halliday, *Director, TePūtahi-Christchurch*
Helen Moran
Reuben Derrick
Johannes Stokvis
Juan Pellegrino
Virginia Serra
Coralie Winn
Lin Clark
Paula and Graham Bennett
Richmond Tiong
Weila Li
Melissa Kerdemelidis
Ross and Lorraine Gray
Ed Rosie
Stuart McKenzie
Prof. Dr. Lawrence Wallen
Annie Davies
Jane Robertson, *Governors Bay*
Norma Orłowski
David Price
Wayne Turp
Julia Allen
Susan and Bryan Kaschula
Linda Pascoe
Jo Wynne
Elizabeth Braggins (*Mus.B., T. Coll. Dip., NZRSSC*)
Stephen Johnston (*QSM, M.A., T.Coll.Dip., Dip. S.L.T*)
Jonathan Baum
Irene and Bill Marks, *Phillipstown*
Fiona Margetts
Graham Croll
Lynn and John Sutton
Dave Branton
Julia Cristie
Faye Grigg
Craig Jarvis
Michelle Read
Fabricio Fernandes, *NZ Registered Architect*
Lisa Powers
Dr Fiona Dalzell, *PhD Candidate, Dept. of Philosophy, UC*
Helen Tulett
Nick Frost
Gabrielle Gazal
Iain Brown, *Somerfield, Christchurch*
Laurel MacDonald, *Waikuku*
Derek Doddington

Suzanne Pickford
Vicky Kelly
Luke Scott
Barbara and Daryl Johnston
Helen Moran
Paul Maunder
Marie Huston
Philip and Ros Burdon
Diana Moir
Jamie Billings
Annabel Calder
Bonita Muntz
Debbie Porter
Amy Putt, *Sydney, Australia*
Sarah Parker
Margaret Vissers, *Christchurch*
Naima Derrick
Melissa Jara
Kate and John Gardner
Mark Catley
Michael Prentice
Tom Phillpotts
Elisa Lanau
Kirsty Bush
Alys Hill
Melinda Maxwell
Pauline Wayman
Martin Meehan, *Charteris Bay*
Ben Taylor
Sharon Ng
Greg Dodds
Jillian Woods
Jamie Hanton

(signatures are still being added)

Selection of comments to Free Theatre:

please add our voices to the letter

We need to leave some interesting things in our city, not just chain stores and corporates....

Kind regards

Suzanne

Yes most definitely.

An absolute shame if you have to leave the gym.

Free theatre is one of the main reasons that my family and friends go into the city. There needs to be more reasons for people to go in to town, not less.

Sometimes economics doesn't have to rule your head. The arts are vital to the city and I believe Free Theatre are essential to the Arts Centre.

It's a fantastic venue and very unique. The uniqueness of the building and Free Theatre's shows add greatly to the arts and culture of Christchurch.

The effort that this theatre Co have put in to both the building and to produce shows of an international calibre would be a tremendous loss to the people and to the city.

Please please please reverse your decision and renew the lease with the Free Theatre Co.

Regards

Aidan de Faoite

0272852030

51 hartley ave

Strowan

Chch 8052

Please add my name.

I'm enraged to see what Christchurch is becoming. The decision-makers SUCK. I can barely drive into town anymore, and I see very little reason to even try, whereas B.E. (Before Earthquakes) I spent many evenings enjoying theatre, live music, cafe's, films or just random-walking to discover things...no more.

Best luck to you,

Lisa Powers

021 075 2171

Please add my name to your list. I am stunned at their decision! I simply cannot believe this could happen. Are they going to change the name from Arts Centre to Shopping Centre?? Completely unacceptable. Please don't give up, you are an essential part of the Arts Centre. Essential!

Michelle Read

Please add Craig Jarvis to your list.

I find this decision very disappointing.

Thank you Craig

It would be a great loss for the people of Christchurch if the Free Theatre were not at the Arts Centre. This group embodies the ethos and spirit of an Arts Centre, it needs to continue to have a presence there.

Graham Bennett
59 Fisher Avenue
Christchurch 8023
New Zealand

Hi George and the team,

Please add me and Virginia Serra, my wife, to the letter. I wholeheartedly support Free Theatre staying at The Gym. It will be a big loss if you go.

Thanks and hope they realise the huge mistake they will make, as the deed said it is for arts and education!!

Juan

Kia ora,

This is a terrible decision by the Arts Centre, but sadly representative of the lip service paid to the arts in the rebuild.

Please add my name to the letter

Best wishes

Mike Grimshaw

Associate Professor Mike Grimshaw

Sociology Te Rangai Toi Tangata, College of Arts

University of Canterbury PB 4800 Christchurch

Ph: 64-3-369 4434 ext 94434

Kia Ora

While I'm not aware of the specifics other than what is contained in your email, I would like to add the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust to your list of people/organisations supporting your ongoing presence in the Arts Centre. Here in Dunedin we are still reeling from the loss of the Fortune, and while professional theatre will continue in the city, I strongly believe that the Trustees of the Arts Centre need to look beyond bottom lines and realise venues are a key part of local ecology. Your city will be much poorer without resident companies being supported to utilise them.

I hope they listen to you, and you know that you have the support of other artistic communities throughout the country.

Nga Mihi Nui
Gareth.
Gareth McMillan
Director
Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust

Hi,
Please add my name as a staunch advocate of the continued presence of The Free Theatre at The Gym. I totally agree, not in keeping with the Trust Deed.
Thanks very much,
Andrew Catanach.

Add me to the list guys, admin@freetheatre.org.nz I will also email the CEO directly, this is BS.

Good luck!
Nick Stevenson

Event Director
Aotearoa Surf Film Festival

M. +64 27 696 0236
E. nick@asff.co.nz

Please add my name to the Free Theatre to stay at the Arts center letter. It should be an art space and a hire able space. I have organised school and other formal events and balls and finding new and interesting venues is always a key to a fab night. Especially one that already has staging, lighting, curtains etc. Much easier to work with something than to have to hire things in for every event. That is wasteful of time, money, energy an add things in my experience.

I back you Free Theatre!

Regards,
Kathryn Jordan-McGrath

Disappointed, Julianne Munro
Sent from my iPhone

Sorry to hear that you're again struggling with the arts centre venue. Although this doesn't come as a surprise, it's difficult for me to understand why they wouldn't endorse the FT presence in the Gym, given all what you guys have made of it over the years, but then I guess it's probably a very simple, straight-forward answer: they want more profits, and naturally cultural or philosophical profits don't count.
Camille Coux camille.coux@orange.fr

Hi dear friends,

I received the bad news that the Arts Centre wouldn't want you to continue bringing joy and excitement to the people of Christchurch and beyond! Why???

Anyway I would like my name to be included in your petition please. The Free Theater shows are the best thing to do in the city.

Wish you all the best!

Melissa Jara