



Guy Maron has turned up the volume on calls for a new concert hall but maybe on the wrong music - Ian McDougall

AT last, the call for a new concert hall in Adelaide and a home for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra has made big news. And full marks to architect Guy Maron for turning up the volume.

For years, many of us have been vocal about that gap in Adelaide's arts infrastructure - a place dedicated to music and performance - but until recently few heeded the call.

There is wide agreement that Adelaide lacks a high-quality auditorium for music, let alone one that is world class. Full marks, as well, as it seems the Government is serious about investigating the idea. After all, Adelaide is Australia's designated UNESCO City of Music.

ASO managing director Vincent Ciccarello is even clearer in his case for a contemporary music centre that is excellent, accessible, and multifunctional. I have heard him talk about a major new centre of music for Adelaide, a place that is available to the whole community, for all sorts of music performance, practise and participation. A place right for a City of Music. He sees something more than a concert hall.

Guy has turned up the volume, but maybe on the wrong music. After all, what is the concert hall in the 21st century? The arts centres of the late 20th century are remnants from older times, before smart phones and streaming music or movies.

Guy refers to modern monuments built by emperors and leaders, but these now seem like aggrandised forts of glass and concrete, overbearing and overwrought, inflexible and too expensive for the wider community to use.



VISIONARY: Architect Ian McDougall led the design team for the Melbourne Recital Centre.

And his suggestion that a single grand iconic hall will magically put a city on the world tourist route is highly risky. The "Bilbao effect", referring to the Spanish city whose troubled economy was "saved" when it opened its iconic Guggenheim Gallery in 1997, has left other cities with white elephant buildings more often than the effect succeeded.

Bilbao's success was the result of timing, an international patron and location. And money.

Bilbao Guggenheim was a relatively low cost "icon", but would have cost about \$230 million if built today. The Guggenheim Foundation gave more than half of an additional \$90 million for running costs. For this, the city got 9100sq m of exhibition spaces.

In comparison, in 2010 the Victorian Government spent about \$170 million to refurbish 11,500sq m to make Hamer Concert Hall a venue for the 21st century. Today the NSW Government is in the process

of spending \$165 million on improving the access, acoustics and stage area of the concert hall of the Sydney Opera House. You want an icon today? Hamburg's controversial concert hall opened in 2017 and cost \$1.3 billion and nearly broke the city.

Building a so-called icon costs a lot more than most Australian governments are prepared to spend. Let's be realistic. Let's be clever.

A new music centre for Adelaide makes sense for tourism but it makes greater sense for Adelaidean lovers of all music, from Liszt to Lizzo. Tourists go where locals go. Adelaide was a benchmark for arts centres when the Festival Centre opened in 1972 - the first such complex in Australia.

The SA Government again has the chance to set the pace nationally by creating the next generation of concert halls, not repeating the old model. Next-Gen venues are designed for players as they perform today while looking to the next gen-

eration of audiences with all the acoustic and technical wizardry we have at our fingertips now.

The newly opened New York City Shed is a case in point. It's totally New York in spirit but on trend - not a big hall for just watching but a plaza and tower for making performances where you can be part of cultural creativity. It's about everyone feeling that they're in the event.

What is the next generation of concert hall in Australia? Not a vast monolith, empty half the time, that takes precious parkland. It will come from careful discussions with Adelaide's performing arts community and its audiences. It will come from listening to the ASO about maximising their potential as a world-class orchestra. It will come from engaging with the cultural conditions of Adelaide and its diverse history: indigenous, settlement, immigrant and now. It will be designed as an environmentally advanced building, based on an understanding of the demands of Adelaide's climate. It seems some recent projects by international designers have not focused on this fundamental design driver today.

Above all, it will be a place for the widest range of uses and users, open and accessible to the community, and of such excellence that the world's best performers will demand to play there. It can be a place that is a continuous music festival, open to all, in a festival city of music. And where? Well, leave the Riverbank. Lot Fourteen is absolutely suitable, and a perfect companion to the National Gallery of Aboriginal Art and Culture.

IAN McDougall is an ADELAIDE-BASED ARCHITECT

THE LAST WORD

WITH
MARTY
SMITH



MOUTHING OFF

- (1) Laughter is the best medicine: A police officer arrives at the scene of an accident, in which a car has smashed into a tree. He rushes over to the vehicle and asks the driver if he is seriously hurt. The driver answers: "How should I know? I'm not a lawyer!"
- (2) Practical wisdom: Two wrongs are only the beginning.
- (3) From a list of Things to Annoy Your Co-workers: "Page yourself over the intercom. Don't disguise your voice."
- (4) From the comic strip Ginger Meggs: "A well-balanced cricket player has a beer in each hand."
- (5) Actual medical record: "On the second day the knee was better and on the third day it had completely disappeared."

INSIGHT

"If ants drove cars it would be even harder to find a parking place." - graffiti.

QUOTE, UNQUOTE

"The reason crime doesn't pay is that when it does, it is called a more respectable name." - Canadian teacher and author Laurence J. Peter.

KEEPING COUNT

8515 - the number of people in the SA federal electorate of Sturt, at the time of the 2001 Census, who were born in southern Europe.

JUST A THOUGHT

If you lined up all the cars in the world end to end, someone would be stupid enough to try and pass them.

REMEMBER WHEN

Today is January 20, Penguin Awareness Day and the 20th day of the year. There are 346 days until the end of the year. On this day:

1926: From Adelaide's afternoon newspaper *The News*: "As the guests of Holden's Motor Body Builders Ltd, 115 boys of the Young Australia League were entertained today at the Grosvenor Hotel, North Tce, city. After lunch they were motored to inspect Holden's Woodville works."

1935: Actress Dorothy Provine, who was tipped by the Australian magazine *TV Week* in 1961 "to become the Betty Grable of the '60s", was born in Deadwood, South Dakota.

1947: In an advert in *The Advertiser*, bed linen company ACTIL sought "an additional 200 girls" for the expansion of its Woodville plant.

1952: Horwood Bagshaw Ltd employees held their annual picnic at Long Gully, in Belair National Park.

1953: The Australian Boys Choir performed at the Port Pirie Town Hall.