

# NATIONAL THEATRE



NATIONAL THEATRE SOHE  
2008



H2092 National theatre st  
kilda ac nov05 front



H2092 National theatre st  
kilda ac nov05 foyer stairs3



Before Photographs -  
Reference F3880 2014



Before Photographs -  
Reference F3880 2014



Before Photographs -  
Reference F3880 2014



After Photographs -  
Reference F3880 2016



After Photograph - Reference  
F3923 2016



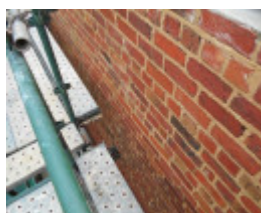
After Photographs -  
Reference F3880 2016



After Photograph - Reference  
F3880 2016



After Photograph - Reference  
F3880 2016



After Photograph - Reference  
F3923 2016



Before Photographs -  
Reference F3923 2014



Before Photographs -  
Reference F3923 2014



H2092 National theatre st kilda plan

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## Location

20 CARLISLE STREET ST KILDA, PORT PHILLIP CITY

## Municipality

PORT PHILLIP CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2092

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO74

## VHR Registration

March 9, 2006

## Heritage Listing

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 15, 2023

### What is significant?

The National Theatre, St Kilda opened in April 1921 as a cinema, the Victory Theatre, described at the time as the second biggest cinema in Melbourne with a capacity for an audience of 3000. The original design by architect Cecil Keeley included a crush hall and roof gardens. By the late 1920s it was owned by a consortium that included film entrepreneur Frank W. Thring who became the managing director of Hoyts and later set up his own company Efttee Films. The theatre directors commissioned extensive alterations in 1928 to designs by the architect Cedric H. Ballantyne. The works reduced the seating capacity to 2550 and made the cinema more luxurious to compete with the newly built Palais Theatre, also in St Kilda. The works included a new proscenium arch, grand entrance foyer with panelled walls and mosaic tiled floor, upper lounge and a barrel vaulted mezzanine promenade. A central marble staircase, using Australian marble, replaced the original two side staircases. Downstairs the original plan included six small shops but two shops made way for more foyer space in the 1928 alterations. The form of the shopfronts remains.

The National Theatre, a heavily modelled Classical revival building, is sited on a diagonal axis with a triangular entrance foyer and two principal facades on both Carlisle and Barkly Streets. The giant column screens and entablature are in the Ionic order. Its symmetrical planning and monumental elevations and interiors are characteristic of the Beaux Arts style. The external side walls have exposed brick keying for stucco treatment which was never completed.

In 1971 the cinema chain Hoyts sold the cinema to the National Theatre Movement for use as its permanent home. The National Theatre was established in 1935 by soprano Gertrude Johnson (1894-1973) on her return to Australia after a successful overseas career. Her aim was to foster training in drama, dance and opera nationally and to form professional ongoing companies to undertake national tours. Schools were established in Opera, 1935, Drama, 1936 and Ballet, 1939 and professional performing companies followed in ballet and opera in 1948 and drama in 1951. During the 1960s, the success of the National Theatre's production companies waned and the focus of the company turned to the schools. The Drama School's directors have included Joan Harris, Kim Durban, Babs McMillan and Ken Boucher. The Ballet School's directors included Marilyn Jones, Kathleen Gorham (associate director), Gailene Stock, Anne Jenner and Beverly Jane Fry. The National Theatre's Opera School amalgamated with the Victorian College of the Arts in 1978.

Under the management of John Cargher, the National Theatre commissioned alterations to convert the former cinema into its school and theatre. The theatre re-opened on 7 September 1974 with the Premier, Rupert Hamer, officiating. The stalls were converted into studios, a new stage, orchestra pit and fly tower were constructed, the auditorium and foyers were refurbished and backstage facilities were completed. Most of the auditorium's ornate plaster mouldings and fittings were retained and the chandeliers re-hung. The huge Victory sign which had surmounted the ridge of the roof was removed. Two Hoyts signs were adapted to read National Theatre, but one was destroyed in a storm in the early 1990s. Some of the windows have been painted over. The original balcony front of the auditorium has been retained and forms part of the orchestra pit as the orchestra pit rail.

Objects of note housed in the building include an early carbon arc slide projector; two c.1940 Gaumont-Kalee carbon arc projectors transferred from the Regent Theatre in the 1950s; and a rare collection of seats from the Tivoli Theatre, Melbourne which were acquired by the National Theatre Company after the theatre burnt down in 1967. The individual lounge seats were a feature of the 1956 rebuilt Tivoli and include plaques with names of Tivoli stars.

The building continues to be used by the National Theatre, now known as the Australian National Memorial Theatre Ltd.

### Why is it significant?

The National Theatre, St Kilda is of historical, social and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

### How is it significant?

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#### How is it significant?

The National Theatre is of historical significance for its associations with the National Theatre Movement and its founder, Gertrude Johnson, a significant figure in the arts in Victoria both as a performer and a pioneering arts

administrator. The theatre also has associations with national broadcaster John Cargher AM, general manager of the company from 1969 to 1989, who oversaw the alterations to the building and a major re-organisation of the company. As a pioneering professional arts company, the National Theatre has important historical associations with the history and development of the performing arts in Australia. Many significant performing artists, directors and writers have been associated with the company throughout its history.

The National Theatre is of historical and social significance for its associations with one of the most popular forms of mass entertainment, the cinema, during its boom years of the interwar period. The 1928 alterations reflect the influence of the more luxurious picture palace style of cinema. The collection of movable objects is significant for assisting in an understanding of the technology, history and development of cinema. The building is valued by a wide community as a venue for films, festivals and theatrical performances over a long period of time. It is also valued as the home of the National Theatre Movement, recognised as a significant cultural institution in the Victorian arts scene.

The National Theatre is of architectural significance as a fine example of a cinema designed in the Beaux Arts style. The most notable elements are the entrance foyer, promenade, upper lounge and dress circle with their elaborate fibrous plasterwork and early decorative features and light fittings.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

**General Conditions:** 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in

this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

#### **Exterior:**

Minor repairs and maintenance.

Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.

Installation and repairing of damp proofing by either injection method or grout pocket method.

Installation or removal of external fixtures and fittings such as, hot water services and taps.

#### **Interior:**

Installation, removal or replacement of projection and sound equipment (except for the early projectors), providing they do not adversely impact on significant elements, or involve structural alterations.

Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings in appropriate heritage colour schemes, provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.

Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.

Installation, removal or replacement of screens or curtains, including cinema screens and curtains (and associated structure), curtain tracks, rods and blinds, other than where structural alterations are required.

Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted art works.

Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.

Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and that the central plant is concealed.

Installation, removal or replacement of electric clocks, public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.

Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

Installation of plant within the roof space, providing that it does not impact on the external appearance of the building or involve structural changes.

Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.

Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring.

Installation, removal or replacement of fixed non-original seating.

Construction dates	1920,
Architect/Designer	Ballantyne, Cedric H, Keeley, Cecil F,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered object integral to a registered place,
Other Names	VICTORY THEATRE,
Hermes Number	14130
Property Number	

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## **Extent of Registration**

### **NOTICE OF REGISTRATION**

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 1995, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register

Number 2092 in the category described as a Heritage Place, Heritage Object/s:  
National Theatre, 20 Carlisle Street, St Kilda, City of Port Phillip.

EXTENT:

1. All of the building marked B1 on Diagram held by the Executive Director.

2. All of the following objects:

Carbon arc slide projector (x1)

Gaumont-Kalee projectors with Westrex sound head and carbon arc lamp house (x2)

Tivoli Theatre lounge seats (x10)

3. All the land marked L1 on Diagram held by the Executive Director described in Certificates of Title Volume 6802 Folio 560, Volume 6802 Folio 229 and Volume 4525 Folio 964.

Dated 9 March 2006

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*