A creative quarter

IN THE HEART

of Wellington
The development of a centre of musical, cultural and educational excellence in Wellington is one of those rare opportunities that can truly inspire a community to create something magnificent.

In a unique collaboration between Victoria University of Wellington, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and the Wellington City Council, a vision is taking shape for a world-class centre of musical innovation in Wellington’s Civic Square. With a restored and strengthened Wellington Town Hall at its heart and the redevelopment of adjacent buildings, the new centre will be a home to Victoria’s New Zealand School of Music and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and provide a foundation for musical performance, education, culture and the arts in Wellington.

Wellington’s Town Hall holds a special place in the heart of every Wellingtonian. Its auditorium is one of the best in the world for acoustic quality and has given us over 100 years of entertainment and community events. I have always been passionate about our Town Hall and I want to see it restored and preserved for future generations.

With your help, we can give Wellington a vibrant world-class music centre that will be a showcase for Wellington, New Zealand’s creative capital. With your support, we can make this project a reality for Wellingtonians to enjoy for ever.

Introduction from
Kerry Prendergast CNZM
Chair of Fundraising
Collaborating to bring music to Civic Square

Together, Wellington City Council, Victoria University and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra plan to strengthen and restore the Wellington Town Hall and link it through dynamic architecture to adjacent buildings. These buildings will become a national hub of musical innovation, creativity and excellence in the heart of New Zealand’s capital city.

Our vision will transform the surrounding complex into a state-of-the-art facility encompassing teaching, rehearsal and research spaces alongside the concert venue. New performance spaces will be created that will not only meet the requirements of a modern music school and world-class orchestra but also provide fit-for-purpose spaces for use by Wellington’s wider arts community.
The centre will create new possibilities for exciting events, festivals and outreach activities as well as a world-class education for the next generation of Wellington’s students. It will provide spaces in which diverse national and international communities can deepen their connections and enable a wide range of music to thrive, from tāonga puoro composition to gamelan percussion and Ethiopian jazz.

Staff, students and players will enliven Civic Square and attract new audiences for musical activities, mirroring similar precincts in the major creative cities of the world and establishing Wellington as a centre of excellence and innovation in the Asia-Pacific region.
The full development of this national music centre will bring all the elements of the New Zealand School of Music and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra together in an integrated precinct within Civic Square, strengthening the connection with other cultural organisations such as the City Gallery and the Wellington City Library.

Athfield Architects’ innovative plans include flexible architecture that will facilitate a stronger connection between music and other art forms, such as design, sound engineering, film and theatre, and foster musical innovation in Wellington.

Film industry executives have commented on the lack of appropriate facilities in New Zealand. The installation of acoustically engineered soundproofing, high spec cabling and technology will deliver New Zealand’s first film scoring stage to complete post production film work.
This is an exciting moment for Victoria University. In partnering with Wellington City Council and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, we aim to co-create a vibrant musical future for the Wellington region.

Victoria’s New Zealand School of Music — Te Kōkī is Aotearoa New Zealand’s highest-ranking tertiary music school, offering the widest range of study options and the only music therapy course in the country. Students can explore their interests, from classical and jazz performance, to composition and music studies, to digital music technology and film scoring, all in the context of strong links with film, design, engineering and other fields. Every year the School participates in around 200 musical events, giving students the chance to perform in a range of genres. We have a history of cross-cultural collaboration through music from the Asia-Pacific region and a growing collection of Māori, Pacific and Asian instruments. We’re fortunate to offer the most comprehensive education for music in New Zealand. Now we hope to have the facilities to match that.

Being part of a national music centre means that talented students will have world-class educational and performance facilities as well as direct connections with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and other creative industries in Wellington. Victoria University is proud to be part of New Zealand’s capital city, and we are committed to strengthening local communities as well as growing Wellington’s international reputation as a strong civic-minded and creative capital.
The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is a beloved national institution with an international reputation second to none. The Wellington Town Hall is at the very heart of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra’s history—it is where we gave our first performance in 1947. Since then the Wellington Town Hall has been hugely significant in our work; its superb acoustics are rated as one of the best of its kind in the world.

A permanent home in the Town Hall and its adjacent buildings will allow us to offer a wider range of performances, recordings and broadcasts to our audiences and we’ll have the technology to share our music and projects more easily in New Zealand and beyond.

The acoustics of the Town Hall are perfect for orchestral performances and recordings. The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra has already had considerable success recording soundtracks. A centre with state-of-the-art recording facilities will make it even more attractive for film studios to use the orchestra, boosting our contribution to Wellington’s economy.

The concept to bring together the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and the New Zealand School of Music is an exciting and bold one that will bring a huge range of opportunities and benefits for musicians, students and, above all, make music accessible to more audiences.

Wellington’s national music centre will be a real boost for our city. The Town Hall is a world-class venue and is a big part of our cultural identity as a city. Wellingtonians have told us clearly they want to see this part of our city reopened and made even better. Having played host to the first ever performance of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, as well as performances by Dame Malvina Major and the Rolling Stones, it’s an important part of our local history.

Since 2013, the Town Hall has been closed for earthquake strengthening, which presents an exciting opportunity for a transformational project that will lead to much greater community engagement in the Civic Precinct. That is why Wellington City Council, Victoria University of Wellington and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra are working closely together on a project plan for a national music centre, with the reopened Town Hall at its heart.

This is a project we are deeply committed to, and have secured funding for. Council is strongly committed to not just re-opening our iconic Town Hall but to ensuring the site is enhanced for future generations of Wellingtonians to enjoy. It will strengthen Wellington’s status as the cultural capital of New Zealand and provide our city with an exciting new attraction.
Our fundraising campaign

Victoria University and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra are embarking on a joint fundraising initiative to raise the funds required to make this facility a reality. Former Wellington Mayor Kerry Prendergast is the Fundraising Chair for this ambitious endeavour and will lead the campaign, along with New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Chair Donald Best, to raise the substantial investment needed from external partners. A number of generous benefactors have expressed their support as we launch this fundraising initiative.

Your support

Together, Victoria University and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra seek to raise $30 million to create a bespoke space for the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and the New Zealand School of Music in the Town Hall and adjoining buildings, to transform the wider Civic Precinct into a major arts and music centre. Wellington City Council has committed to funding the seismic strengthening of the Wellington Town Hall.

We have secured a significant leadership gift towards our joint fundraising goal and seek support from partners who share our vision for a world-class national music centre in Wellington.

For more information, please contact the Victoria University of Wellington Development Office.
Phone: + 64-4-463 7431  Email: vuw-development@vuw.ac.nz

Visit victoria.ac.nz/creative-quarter to help us enliven and energise Civic Square.
“It would be a crime not to restore the Town Hall.
It is a precious jewel.
It is rare and irreplaceable.
It cannot be recreated.
Like an old instrument, it improves with time.
It could be unique in the world.”

Ara Guzelimian, Provost and Dean at New York’s prestigious Juilliard School.