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# HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE



HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE  
SOHO 2008



1 royal south street memorial  
theatre ballarat front view



H0648 HER MAJESTY'S  
THEATRE LHA 2015 1.JPG



H0648 HER MAJESTY'S  
THEATRE LHA 2015 2.JPG



H0648 HER MAJESTY'S  
THEATRE LHA 2015 3.JPG



H0648 HER MAJESTY'S  
THEATRE LHA 2015 4.JPG



H0648 HER MAJESTY'S  
THEATRE LHA 2015 5.JPG

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## Location

17 LYDIARD STREET SOUTH BALLARAT CENTRAL, BALLARAT CITY

## Municipality

BALLARAT CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0648

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO70

## VHR Registration

March 11, 1987

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 24, 1999

This building, which was known in 1874 as the Academy of Music, in 1898 as Her Majesty's Theatre, and, from 1966 to 1988 as the South Street Memorial Theatre, has both historical and architectural significance. It is a rare survivor of a number of Ballarat and Bendigo theatres which, in the 19th century, rivalled those in Australia's capital cities. The Ballarat theatre is arguably the oldest operating theatre in Australia. According to Ross Thorne, a major exponent of our theatrical history, the memorial theatre is "probably the most significant theatre in Australia today". Thorne claims that it is the most substantially intact of our remaining 19th century theatres, which include the Theatre Royal in Hobart, the Princess in Melbourne and Her Majesty's in Brisbane.

On a Victoria-wide basis, the Ballarat theatre has special importance for its unique interior. Its double horse-shoe shaped balconies supported on columns, added from the designs of the notable architect William Pitt in 1898, are the last example of this type of theatre design in the State. The theatre has significance because of its associations with two distinguished 19th century architects, George Browne and William Pitt, both of whom specialised in the design of theatres. Browne, who was responsible for the original 1874 design of the Academy of Music, also designed Melbourne's rebuilt Theatre Royal in 1872. He was the designing architect in 1874 of Rupertswood, the Sunbury mansion of Sir William J Clarke, Patron of the Academy of Music. Pitt, who designed the 1898 alterations and additions, included among his theatrical works the new Princess Theatre in 1886, the Bijou (rebuilt after the fire of 1889), the 1891 design of the Melbourne Opera House and its rebuilding in 1901 (later known as the Tivoli), alterations to the interior of the Theatre Royal in Bourke Street in 1904 and alterations to the interior of the Hobart Theatre Royal in 1911. Also, at the turn of the century, Pitt was responsible for extensive alterations to Her Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne. Other major buildings designed by Pitt include the Rialto and the Olderfleet in Collins Street and the St Kilda Town Hall.

The Theatre is a building which illustrates important aspects of the social and cultural life of Ballarat over a period of more than 100 years. It has importance for its links with Sir William J. Clarke (1831-1897), the landowner, stud breeder and philanthropist for whom it was built in 1874, and with a number of Ballarat's leading citizens, most notably William Collard Smith (1830-1894), agent, investor and politician. It is important for its associations from 1896 with the prestigious Royal South Street Society, a Ballarat organisation dedicated to the promotion of excellence in the performing arts. This society owned the building from 1965. The theatre is associated also with the Sun Aria competitions, which resulted in the discovery of many important Australian singers. Notable theatrical figures who performed at the theatre included the company of William Lyster, who is remembered for his part in establishing opera as a permanent institution in Victoria; Amy Castles, dramatic soprano; Dame Nellie Melba and Gladys Moncrieff.

The building has landmark value. The original 1874 Lydiard Street facade, which survives partially intact, provides a contributory element to the Lydiard Street precinct. The rear three-storey brick section has a strong visual element and closes the vista along Lewis Street.

## 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:

\* Internal minor works to the back stage, side stage and sub-basement rooms on Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 in the areas as shown on the attached plans numbered Drawing 03/01, 03/02 and 03/03 which are endorsed by the Executive Director and form part of this permit exemption

\* The internal minor works include but are not limited to the installation of lighting, screens, storage systems, mezzanine structures and fittings and fixtures provided the work has been agreed with by appropriately qualified heritage consultant.

#### CONDITIONS:

1. Exempt classes of works or activities are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the registered place / object. However, if other previously hidden original or inaccessible details of the object or place are uncovered, any works that may affect such items shall immediately cease. The Executive Director shall be notified of the details immediately to enable Heritage Victoria representatives to inspect and record the items, and for discussion to take place on the possible retention of the items, or the issue of a modified approval.
2. If there is a Conservation Policy and Plan approved by the Heritage Council or Executive Director, all works and activities shall be carried out in accordance with that Policy and Plan.
3. Nothing in this Declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exempt alterations provided work has not commenced on the alteration.

THE ATTENTION OF THE OWNER AND/OR APPLICANT IS DRAWN TO THE NEED TO OBTAIN ALL OTHER RELEVANT PERMITS PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF WORKS.

Construction dates            1874,

Architect/Designer            Browne, George,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,  
Other Names ACADEMY OF MUSIC, ROYAL SOUTH STREET MEMORIAL THEATRE,  
Hermes Number 67  
Property Number

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## History

Associated People: William Pitt, Sir William Clarke

## Plaque Citation

Her Majesty's Theatre is registered by Heritage Council Victoria

Built 1874-1875 to a design by architect George Browne, this Classical style building is one of the most intact of surviving 19th century theatres in Australia. The double horseshoe-shaped balconies were added by architect William Pitt in 1898.

## Extent of Registration

### AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic Building No. 648, Royal South Street Memorial Theatre, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat (to the extent of the whole of the Memorial Theatre Building and the whole of the land in Certificate of Title, Vol. 4306 Fol. 123). [Victoria Government Gazette No. G10 11 March 1987 p. 557&558]

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*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/>*