

# The Hedberg

Wednesday 14 April 2021

Following is an account of our exploration of The Hedberg last week by member **Andrew Ross**:

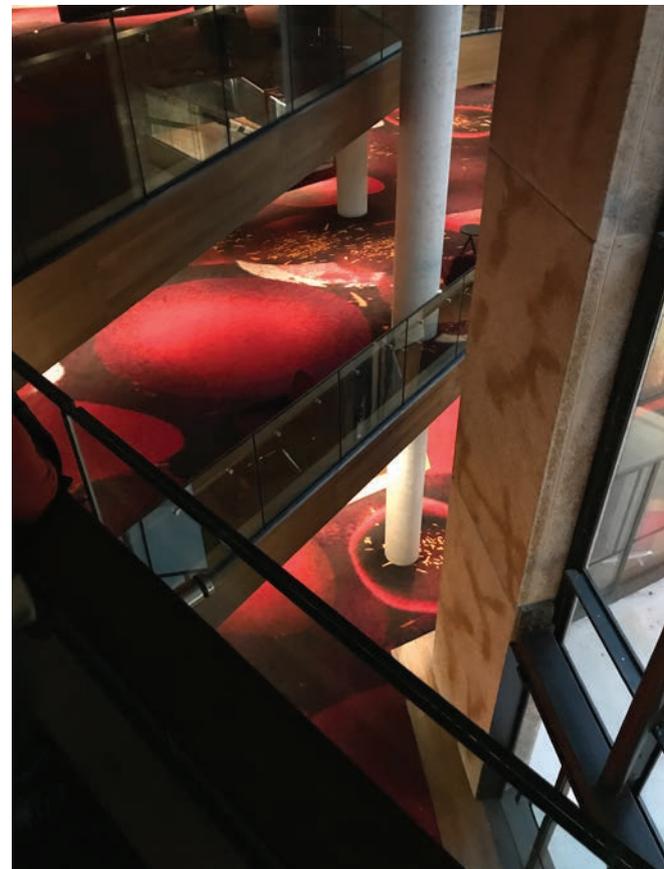
I was one of the lucky members who joined the tour of The Hedberg recently, and it was wonderful to be shown around this addition to Hobart's cultural venues by some wonderful guides, including Theatre Royal CEO Tim Munro, Conservatorium concert officer Don Bate and Peta Heffernan, representing the architectural design team.

Having worked at the Theatre Royal many years ago and having been in the audience regularly for even longer, I was very aware of the shortcomings of the cramped foyers and box office and the difficulty of facilitating access for those with limited mobility. So it is wonderful to see that the new front of house spaces, which serve all three levels of the theatre as well as the new studio theatre and the Conservatorium's new Recital Hall and other venues, all offer level access and lifts, as well as plenty room and lots of very modern toilet facilities.





The foyer areas have a very distinctive carpet full of sparks and flames against a black background; Peta explained that they worked with a Tasmanian aboriginal design consultant to incorporate the fireside storytelling traditions of indigenous Tasmanians beside the more theatrical storytelling that happens inside the theatres.





Tim took us through the Theatre Royal up onto the stage, where we admired the view.





Then we went on through the new backstage areas and up to the new studio theatre. This is a replacement for the Backspace Theatre, a much-loved performance space going back many decades, where local theatre makers and visiting cabaret-style performers created many memorable shows. The new studio seats up to 300, but has a very flexible layout, which Tim hopes will become the basis of at least as many memorable shows and highlight local creativity.

Don Bate then showed us around the Conservatorium's side of the development. We were allowed to peek into some rehearsal rooms where Con students were practicing their instruments and, in one room, working on high-tech recordings.



Then we were privileged with a visit to the Ian Potter Recital Hall where the Southern Gospel Choir were rehearsing — the sound was wonderful.

Back outside, Don and Peta told us a little of the technical magic being installed in this hall, which uses sophisticated electronics to mimic the acoustics of much bigger halls. Once fully functional, performers and audiences will be able to experience the sound of anything from a small studio up to a huge cathedral within this single space.



We were then treated to a glass of wine in the Dress Circle foyer, where both Tim and Don discussed their excitement about the Hedberg, looking forward to many performances and post-show chats in all these spaces, and to it becoming a central, well-used and much-loved part of Hobart's cultural life.



Photos by Andrew Ross and Julie Hawkins



Bad legs? Sore head? Inveterate ulcers?"