

9 & 11 EMPRESS PLACE

A Timeless Encore



Owners:
National Arts Council &
Singapore Symphonia Company Limited

Architect:
W Architects Pte Ltd

Engineer:
T.Y. Lin International Pte Ltd

Contractor:
Sato Kogyo (Singapore) Pte Ltd

Two monuments built at different times for distinct purposes, Victoria Theatre (circa 1862) and Victoria Concert Hall (circa 1905) have been elegantly rejuvenated with great skill and conceptual finesse. Taken together, restoration and improvements to the buildings have made these major cultural and architectural landmarks newly relevant and resplendent, adding to their aura of Neo-Classical grace and grandeur.



Victoria Theatre, Victoria Concert Hall and Clock Tower regained their prominence

Striking A Respectful Balance

The team did well to balance the goals of restoring the past and meeting the demands of two modern art venues. Good effort is evident in retracing their history and evolution. As a result, hidden and lost gems from an unsympathetic 1950s renovation were reclaimed from obscurity. These include the original central courtyard and adjacent passageway, the internal façade flanking Victoria Theatre, and the ground floor space of Victoria Concert Hall which has been returned to its monumental glory with the removal of intrusive structural pillars from the previous renovation.

Throughout the restoration, the venerable structures were well protected with extensive shoring. The team commendably engaged conservation specialists for consultation on materials usage, and skilled craftsmen from India for the intricate plaster works. This further secures the

quality and authenticity of the restoration.

Ushering In the New

In bringing history forward to embrace the buildings' new ambitions, the team introduced many sensitive interventions to dramatic effect. The recovery of the old open courtyard made way for a voluminous covered atrium with an ingenious skylight that visually connects the clock tower to the buildings. The lost internal façade was reinterpreted with such elegant restraint that

the new wall stands with great confidence in contrast with the old.

While the new Victoria Theatre has a modernised interior, the past remain everywhere and in delightfully unexpected ways. Timber seat backings have been repurposed as sculptural pieces and metal chair components, redirected to serve as a support for the timber wall claddings.

Noteworthy interventions at the Victoria Concert Hall include the refurbished balcony and mezzanine. Rebuilding them smarter and lighter allowed for the removal of intrusive support beams that had distorted the grand staircases below. Elegant new glazing for both porticos have given the facades a much lighter appearance. The extra effort to reinterpret the dome's missing crown, restore the clock mechanism, and reinstate the original 'City Crest' is laudable.



Crisply restored plaster-works on the façade



Crown modelled after original reinstated above copper dome



Main entrance to central atrium



Restored and refreshed interior of Victoria Concert Hall



Reinterpreted interior of Victoria Theatre



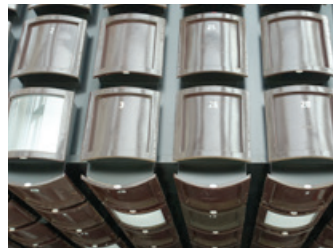
Sensitive reinterpretation of Victoria Theatre's atrium façade



Tympanum with elaborate plaster-work wreaths and crest of the Colony of Singapore



Cleaned bust of Sir Andrew Clarke



Old chair backs used as sculptural element at Victoria Theatre



Festoons, plaster and wrought iron-work at front porch



Victoria Concert Hall's atrium façade



Foundation plaque from 9 August 1902



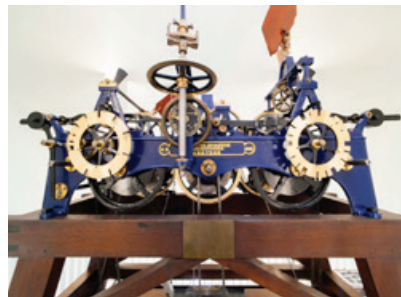
1915 Singapore Mutiny memorial plaque



Old chair frames used as balustrades at Victoria Theatre



Column of Victoria Concert Hall



The clock mechanism



Restored clock tower bells



Coat of Arms of the Colony of Singapore



Plaque to commemorate re-opening of Victoria Concert Hall