

c/- The Secretary
140 Edinburgh Road
Castlecrag
NSW 2068

12 December 2012

Richard Newton
President
The Haven Amphitheatre
The Bulwark
Castlecrag
NSW 2068

Dear Richard,

Re: The Haven Amphitheatre Committee's proposal for stage and associated works for the Haven Amphitheatre

Thank you for meeting at the Haven Amphitheatre site with representatives of the Walter Burley Griffin Society last month and for the A4 copy of the The Haven Amphitheatre Committee's proposal for stage and associated works for the Haven Amphitheatre which you gave us then.

Following are the Society's comments based on this document and the site meeting.

We look forward to further collaboration with The Haven Amphitheatre Committee and Willoughby City Council to achieve a desirable outcome based on the comments we make on the following pages.

The Haven Amphitheatre Committee's proposal for stage and associated works for the Haven Amphitheatre

We thank the Haven Amphitheatre Committee for meeting with the president of the Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc., Professor James Weirick on 3 July 2012, and also for meeting with four committee members of the Society, Michael Thomson, James Smallhorn, Adrienne Kabos and myself on 10 November at the Haven Amphitheatre and giving us on that day an A4 copy of the Haven Amphitheatre Committee's proposal. Since then, the Walter Burley Griffin Society's committee has met, on 28 November, and this response is based on the views expressed at this time.

The Society wishes to gratefully acknowledge all the work that the Haven Amphitheatre Committee has done over the years regarding staging productions and maintaining the amphitheatre. Their dedication and enthusiasm for the benefit of the community is greatly appreciated.

The Walter Burley Griffin Society and the Haven Amphitheatre Committee agree that the key issue is to ensure the enduring legacy of a unique performance space that belongs to the community.

History

The Haven Amphitheatre is part of a parcel of land purchased by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin which became the Haven Estate adjoining the Castlecrag Estate which was purchased five years earlier in 1921 by the Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA). Today the Castlecrag Estate and the Haven Estate comprise the Griffin Conservation Area (GCA).

Marion Mahony Griffin (MMG) was the driving force behind the establishment in the early 1930s of the Haven Valley Scenic Theatre, an open-air theatre for the community created in the natural glen beside the foreshore reserve and the waters of Middle Harbour. Local sculptor and stonemason Bim Hilder, along with the Griffins and other members of the community, built the amphitheatre by creating seating out of sandstone blocks on the western side of the glen. The stage was defined by three large rocks as named by MMG in *The Magic of America*.

As Marion describes in *The Magic of America* (page 430)

"... So the valley was astir for weeks with Castlecrag "Bees", Griffin working like a navy [Note: i.e., a construction laborer] along with the others, to his great delight, for if he had not been destined for architectural realms his choice of occupation would certainly have been digging ditches and breaking stones. A stretch of the west side of the valley was terraced and faced with great stones to form seats for the audience; the other side and the head of the valley, a hundred feet above and down a hundred feet and more to the harbor, was the stage the loveliest ever seen. There were coastal Angophoras great and small with their ever-changing colored bark, one of the eight pillars of heaven in the Australian Natives' lovely lore and a magical succession of blossoming trees, shrubs and climbers through the year. No man-made imitation of indoor theatre here but every fairy creation carefully, religiously safeguarded; wattles, different kinds, so golden blossoms for each month in the year. ...



LEFT: photograph in the 1936 program for the Anthroposophical Society's Michael Festival. Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc Collection, courtesy Bim Hilder.

And the rocks! **The Iphigenia rock!** That top promontory where Iphigenia gave her invocation to the sea - with its precipitous drop; and the cave below where in a later play *Everyman* was laid in burial. The winding path down around the huge leaning tree on whose great sloping boll the aboriginal goddess of the honey sweet grass-tree slept till man, redeemed, found her and all nature came to life again, and around to the **Demeter rock**, on the terrace below. ... The path forks to the west down to the **Prometheus rock** ...”

“The rest of the valley is the stage, trees and bush and blossoms and rocks to meet any dramatic requirement. To the North a steep rock wall with a long terrace - a road in fact above the eye running East and West. Above it terrace on terrace of spectacular rocks and shrubbery and grand trees. To the East a flat terrace above the eye so scenes can appear and disappear across it, mysterious or spectacular. Then the little stream flowing down to the sea, its head and its further bank offering a rich range of settings - terraces, huge boulders, exquisite varied shrubbery - dainty Lily of the Valley trees and majestic Angophoras and so on. It fitted the aboriginal lore perfectly, completely.”

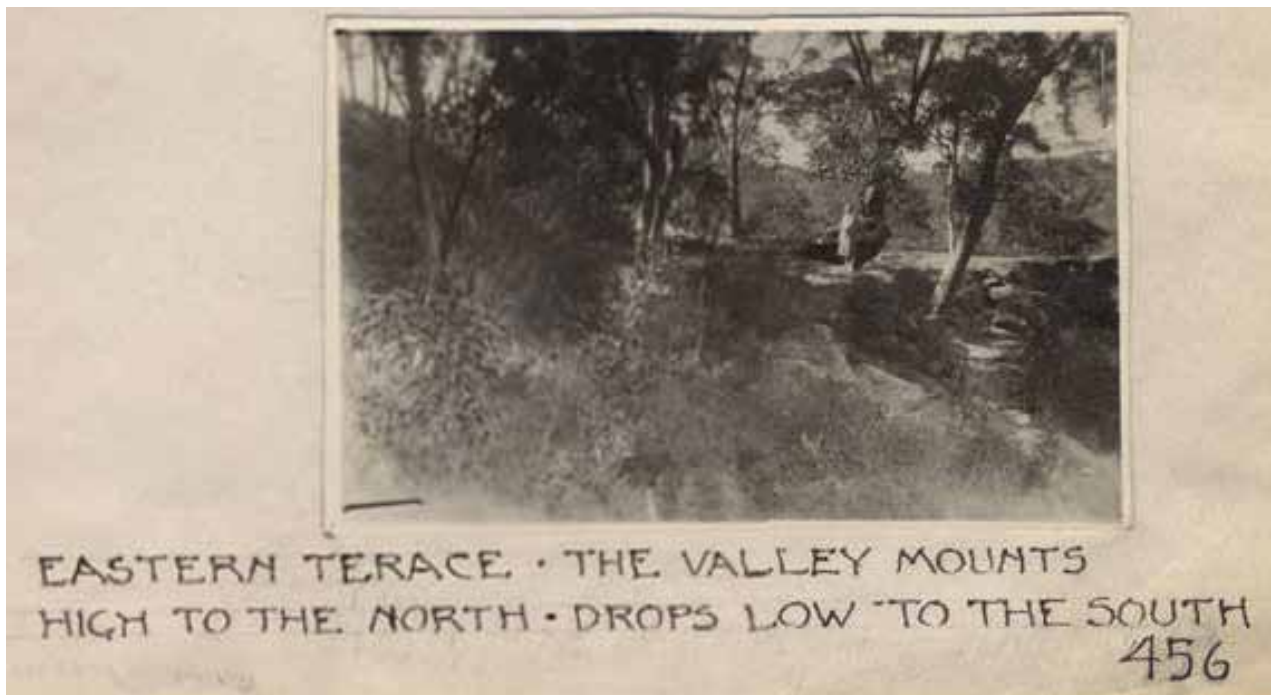
Many dramatic works were performed in the Haven Valley directed by Marion Mahony Griffin including Greek tragedies and medieval plays. *The Magic of America* on page 446 lists ten, including *Iphigenia in Tauris* by Euripides and *Everyman*. The naming of the major rock outcrops by the Griffins indicates the significance they bestowed upon them, especially as the names are from Greek mythology (Demeter is the goddess of the harvest, and Prometheus a champion of mankind).

Performers on the Prometheus rock, *The Magic of America*



Following Walter Burley Griffin's death and Marion Mahony Griffin's return to Chicago in late 1938 performances dwindled and then ceased during World War II with the requirement for complete blackout at night. In 1943 Marion Mahony Griffin gifted the title deeds of the Haven Amphitheatre and the Castlehaven Reserve foreshore to Willoughby Council for the public.

Photos from Marion Mahony Griffin's *The Magic of America*



Subsequently the site became overgrown and strewn with debris. In the early 1970s the Castlecrag community worked to restore the site to its former beauty. Architect Robert Sheldon designed a timber stage based on triangular forms, a Griffin design motif. It was made entirely of timber straddling the creek with a timber deck that allowed the rain to fall through to the creek (see photograph below). The local community built the entire structure in just 11 days. A small number of seats were built on the northern slope.

The first performance was held in April 1976 as part of the American Bicentennial celebrations and the centenary of Walter Burley Griffin's birth celebrations.

In 1992 the stage was enlarged and changing room and storage facilities built underneath to a plan again designed by Robert Sheldon on a voluntary basis. The seating on the northern slope was enlarged considerably. Compressed cement sheeting with an Emer-Clad waterproof membrane was placed over the enlarged stage.

We understand that the HAC is concerned that the present stage structure is beginning to fail and requires constant maintenance by a team of dedicated volunteers, and this has prompted the committee to seek advice both within the community and from outside experts in engineering and construction, and to formulate a proposal to rebuild the facilities of the theatre.

Yeoman of the Guard performance in 1989. Note the smaller stage.



The Haven Amphitheatre Committee's proposal

The proposal is presented as a concept design in a document prepared by Fitzpatrick+Partners, assisted by leading engineering firm Arup and Renew Constructions who provided their professional expertise on a voluntary basis. As the document states, their brief was to design a “refurbished facility that should be:

- Cost effective in terms of capital and ongoing expenses;
- Suitable for a wide range of performance types;
- Optimised for use as an amphitheatre;
- Physically in keeping with the natural landscape features of the site and its cultural heritage;
- Capable of seating at least as many as present and if possible more;
- As maintenance free as possible;
- Capable of housing weather protection for performers and their equipment;
- Suitable for waterproof storage and ‘Green Room’; under the stage;
- Easy to operate as a theatre, including lighting, audio, weather protection and box office;
- Durable for the foreseeable future; and
- Safe and secure.”

We use these criteria as the basis for our following comments. (In doing so the Society does not accept that these are the only relevant criteria or that they are of equal importance or listed in order of importance).

Haven Amphitheatre Committee (HAC) aim 1

Cost effective in terms of capital and ongoing expenses

HAC proposal

“It is proposed that the most cost effective approach will be to replace the existing timber stage with a maintenance free concrete structure”. Arup engineers assessed options for a composite concrete and steel stage, and a full concrete stage, rejecting the first on the grounds of cost, accessibility and durability. Accordingly, the HAC submitted that a full concrete stage is the only maintenance-free and viable solution.

The estimated cost of the upgraded facility is \$400,000. It is proposed that seed capital of \$150,000 will come from WCC (as Council owns the land), grant funding of \$100,000 has been applied for through the Member for Willoughby, gifts from community members are estimated at \$75,000 and it is anticipated that other sponsors will contribute the remaining \$75,000. Members of HAC have informed the Society that a key potential sponsor will walk away from the deal if the project does not proceed now.

WBGS comments

Considering that funding is limited, the scale and cost of the redevelopment needs to be assessed against the use of the site for theatrical performances and other activities during the year. A core issue is therefore the cost of the proposed refurbishment against the potential use of the amphitheatre.

Clearly, removing all the existing timber structure, the majority of which is in good condition, and replacing it all with concrete would be a great deal more expensive than repairing the existing timber structure. Much less money would need to be raised to repair and renovate the existing stage. A Structural Assessment of the existing structure prepared by an independent consultant would reveal the extent of deterioration to the structure and it would also assist in assessing the funds needed for ongoing expenses.

Thus, the cost effectiveness of a heavily engineered concrete structure and repairs and modifications to the existing stage needs to be rigorously assessed.

HAC has raised concerns about the possible environmental and health issues of the existing treated timber. As the timber is now decades old very little of the residual treatment would be left on the outside surfaces of the timbers as a health risk. Decayed timber would need to be replaced, which would most likely be treated pine. Today, chemical treatment of treated pine is no longer such a health risk and is Australian Standards compliant. If this is still a concern regarding health risk, however, the timbers located near people movement could be sealed or clad to eliminate any chance of risk.

HAC aims 2 and 3

Suitable for a wide range of performance types;

Optimised for use as an amphitheatre.

HAC proposal

A new elliptical stage is proposed increasing the stage area from an irregular 110 sq metres to a regular 130 sq metres. The lower level beneath the stage is to be excavated for a new stormwater channel / “creek bypass culvert” / box drain. The new undercroft would enlarge the existing structure, with a concrete slab floor and reinforced block rendered walls with vinyl floor tiles. It would incorporate a lockable storage zone for electronic equipment, a ‘green room’ with sink, dressing zones and a WC facility with shower.

WBGs comments

What is proposed would change the site significantly. The Society appreciates HAC’s enthusiasm and interest regarding performances and the proposed facilities. However the impact of the proposal on the Haven glen, its rocks and landforms, the creek, trees and vegetation, appears to have been given a lower priority than other aims. It is the performances / events that should be tailored for the site rather than the site made suitable for all conceivable performances / events. This matter is discussed further below.

HAC aim 4

Physically in keeping with the natural landscape features of the site and its cultural heritage;

HAC proposal

The Haven Amphitheatre is situated at a fork of The Scarp and The Barricade, and the site falls quite steeply towards the bay. It is heavily vegetated with an existing creek cutting through the centre of the space. “The new shape and orientation of the stage are informed by ... the existing landscape elements and view corridors” (p11). The HAC believes that use of concrete would be environmentally safer than other options as it would be pumped in down the slope, causing minimal interference.

WBGs comment

The heritage significance of the site is its unique setting in a natural glen or gully. Therefore the creek needs to be left as natural as possible together with the natural vegetation and rocks which are integral to the site. The indigenous trees with their random branches and glimpses of the harbour are a key to the uniqueness of this space – it is the only amphitheatre in the world exactly like this.

A key concern of the WBGs management committee is that the HAC proposal, as it stands, appears to be over-engineered for the site. The Society feels that the concept should be adjusted to include some



LEFT: The tree growing through the stage which is just one of the desirable idiosyncratic features that meld the existing stage with the natural bushland setting.

irregular and idiosyncratic features like the tree through the stage to retain the natural character of the site.

Concern was also expressed by our committee that, while the slope of the site may facilitate concrete to be pumped in down the slope, the impact of other construction activities has yet to be addressed. For instance, the use of concrete could result in potential damage to the site in constructing heavy formwork or spillage during concreting. Moreover, concrete needs large formwork sheets and steel reinforcing sheets to be brought in and initially stacked up on site in a 2 to 5 metre construction zone outside of the footprint of the concrete slab to be constructed and its scaffolding.



LEFT: trunk of the iconic *Angophora costata* (Sydney Red Gum), that is beside the creek and close to the southern corner of the existing stage. This magnificent tree could be detrimentally affected by the proposed concrete construction.

BELOW: Steel reinforcing for concrete slab stacked up and worked on outside the footprint of the concrete slab being constructed. Construction zones for building concrete slabs can be 2 to 5 metres wide but are often much wider even on relatively flat ground as at this site in The Parapet, Castlecrag which until recently had a beautiful garden.



More significantly, while concrete may have a longer life than treated timber, it will eventually deteriorate with time. When that time comes, its replacement in such a location poses a large burden on a future generation. It would all have to be jack-hammered into blocks and craned out, which would potentially be very destructive of this natural site.

The HAC advised that Council has undertaken a survey of the trees on the site, but there was no mention of the rocks. The rocks and the creek are core elements of the unique natural heritage of the site. In particular, the rock boulders in the glen (described by Marion Mahony Griffin in *The Magic of America* and used as the stages in the early performances) need to be protected as they are an important aspect of the glen's amenity and the amphitheatre's heritage significance. The proposed excavation of the undercroft area of proposal (p15) poses the risk of damage to the Prometheus Rock, and the creek bypass. The stage drainage is not indicated nor is ventilation for the undercroft. The two young trees and tree ferns near the existing stage would not survive the construction.

The creek, which created the glen in the first place, needs to be respected visually and with any construction work. Wherever possible, the natural creek bed should be left untouched.

The magnificent large mature and healthy angophora close to the southern corner of the stage, is outside the current plans for the stage area, but even so may not survive the proposed concrete construction.

Any construction needs to touch the earth lightly. The existing timber structure does that but the proposed insitu concrete would not. Achieving the HAC's objective requires a solution that 'more lightly touches the landscape', so a less damaging option is required.

BELOW: Part of the rock that Marion Mahony Griffin called 'Prometheus Rock' which is now largely under the stage and would be damaged or destroyed by the proposed concrete construction.



HAC aim 5

Capable of seating at least as many as present and if possible more

HAC proposal

New timber seating is proposed across the creek near the stage with extra rows of tiered timber seats which would join both of the current seating areas (p11). The Proposed Site Plan (p14) indicates six rows of “new solid timber slab bench seats over creek with integral backrest”. Importance is given to the continuity of seating linking the existing two groups of seating that would create more conventional seating.

WBGs comments

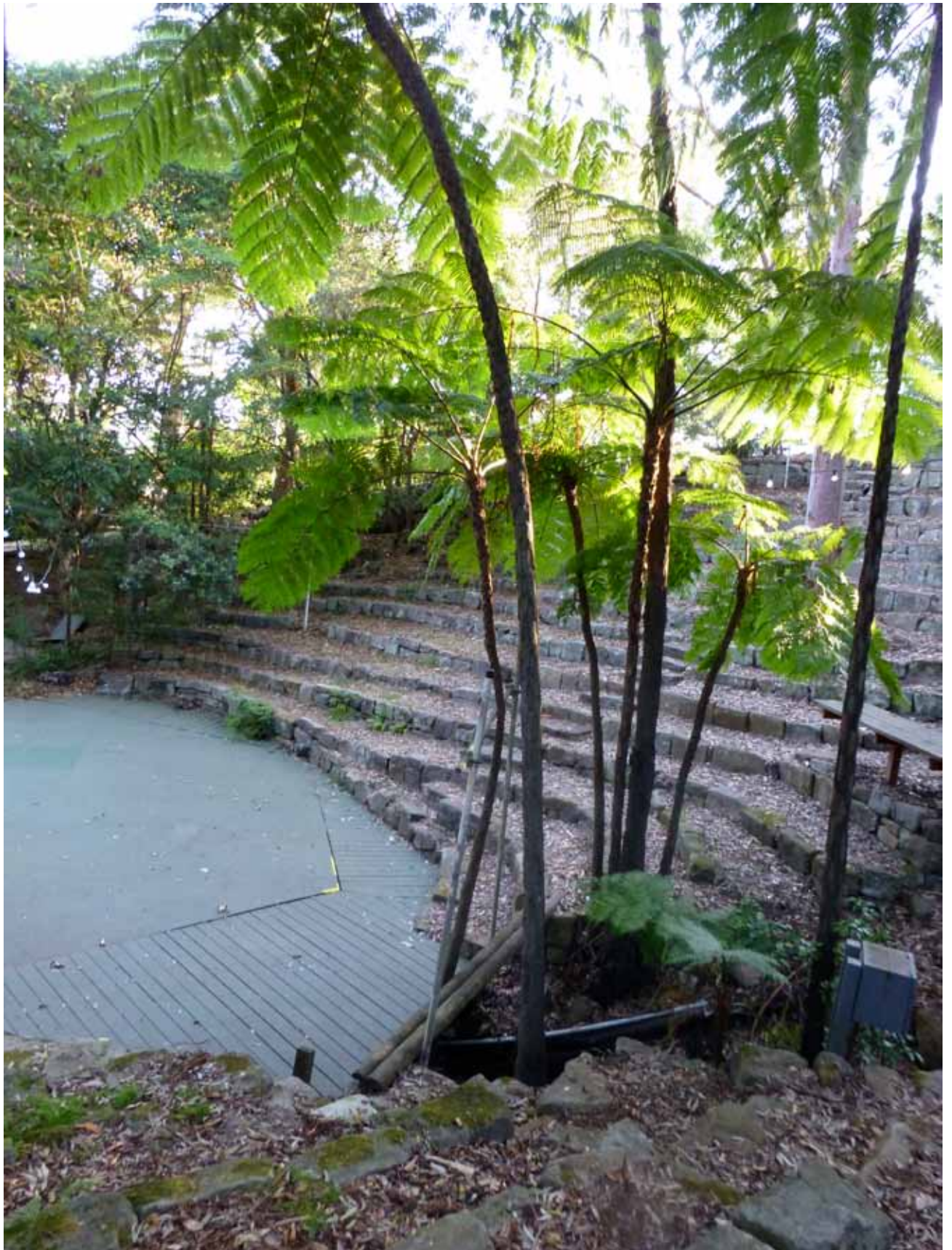
It is the unconventionality of the Haven Amphitheatre that makes it so special. The grouping of tree ferns, located where these seats are proposed, is an important element of the amphitheatre, its amenity and ambience. The two distinct groups of tiered sandstone seats are part of the historic heritage of the site. Joining them together with new seats would confuse the heritage and understanding of the original 1930s seating on the western side and the group of 1970s and 1990s seating on the northern side.

The HAC proposal does not present a rationale for increasing the number of seats. Increasing the seating would change the whole visual character of the amphitheatre and impact on its heritage. In particular, the creek is a particularly important element and needs to be respected in its natural state.

BELOW: The tree ferns are a very important aspect of the Haven Amphitheatre's ambience. They also delineate the creek and separate the original 1930s seating group (in the photo's foreground) from the more recent 1970s and 1990s seating.



BELOW: Tree ferns located where the rows of new seating is proposed.



HAC aim 6

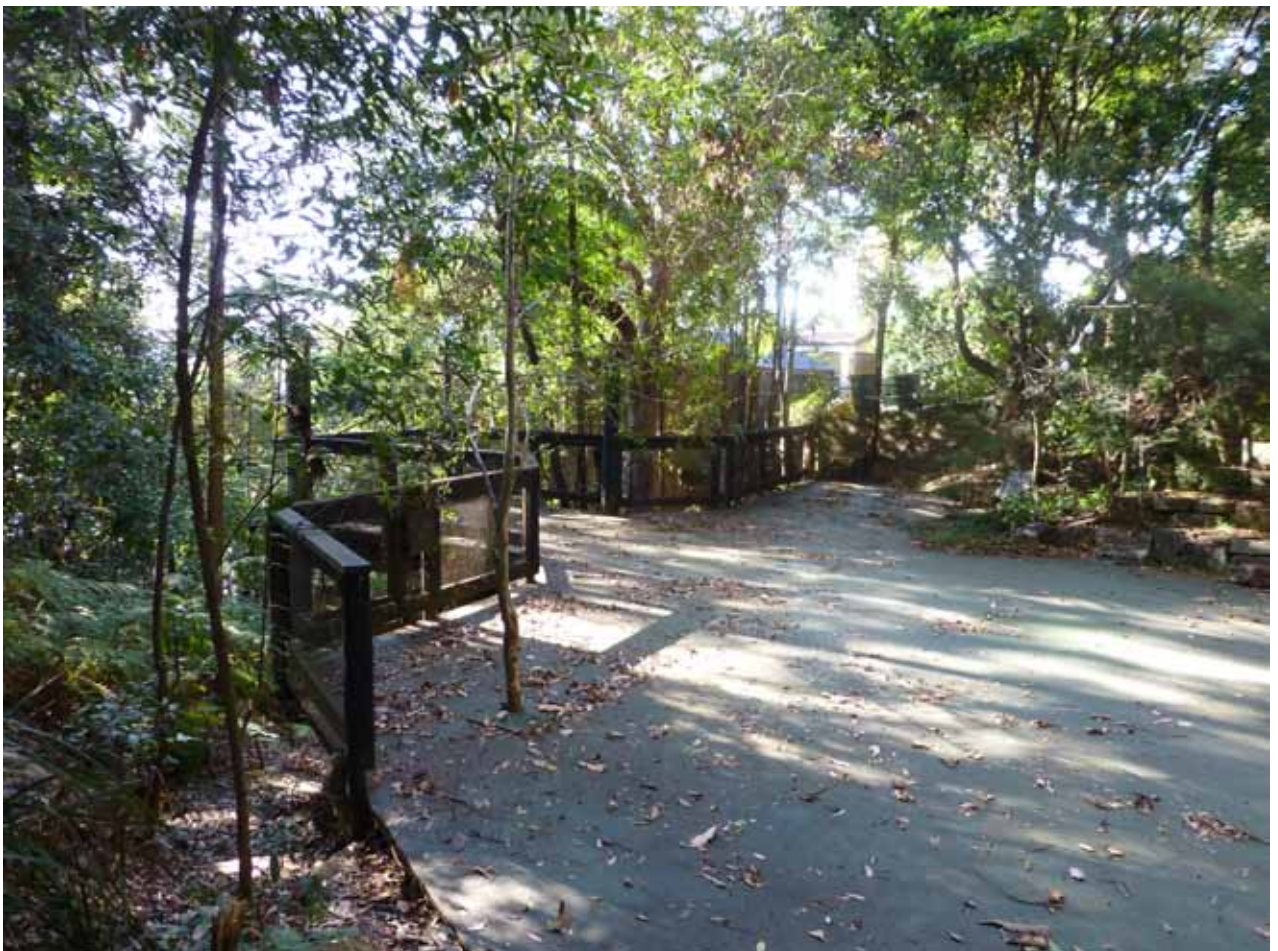
As maintenance free as possible

HAC proposal

The stage surface would be a suspended concrete slab with a selected aggregate-wash finish. HAC describe concrete as “the only maintenance free material”. “The space between the performance area and the existing stone seating, together with a new sub-stage area to the south, would be finished with new random stone paving over the concrete base, while a continuous stainless steel drain would follow the elliptical stage form”. The HAC is seeking a solution that would last for 75-100 years, not just 20 years or so for a timber structure.

WBGS comments

Concrete requires maintenance in the long term and ultimately comes to the end of its workable life. That life can be quite variable. Reinforced concrete rectification works at the MLC Centre in the city costing millions of dollars are currently under way to this building that opened only 34 years ago, due to the concrete cancer in the pre-fabricated exterior reinforced concrete elements. Given this uncertainty over the life of a concrete structure and the potential impact on the site of its eventual removal, an alternative such as timber with a 25 year asset life deserves more serious consideration.



HAC aim 7

Capable of housing weather protection for performers and their equipment;

HAC proposal

There would be a demountable folding awning that could be raised to protect performers and expensive equipment in the rear portion of the stage (some 40% of the area) against rain. The stage awning would be mounted on two concrete foundations and would fold down into a 1200mm high upstand to the rear of stage with ply doors over to house roof membrane structure when not in use (p14). "The two aluminium arches and potentially the membrane are stored in a semi elliptical box around the edge of the stage which is closed with a waterproof lid. This storage box will double function as a balustrade around the stage" (p19). HAC pointed out that such protection was essential in order to obtain insurance against losses from bad weather.

WBGS comments

The ability to provide protection for performers and expensive equipment against wet weather, particularly for insurance purposes, is acknowledged. Nevertheless, members of the committee felt that the proposed folding awning over the stage would be very large. Moreover, its impact on tree limbs and branches in its path, such as the large graceful limb of the angophora that creates a bower over the stage, or of the concrete foundations for the pivoting awning on the natural rocks, have yet to be addressed.

The Society is concerned that the awning's storage box / balustrade around the stage would be a permanent visually solid obstruction to the views of the bushland and glimpses of Middle Harbour that can be seen now through the existing stage balustrade. Overall, the folding awning as currently proposed is considered to be a complex mechanical device that appears out of place for a little bush theatre to use a few times each year. The Society appreciates the need for capacity to protect the instruments of small string groups from rain and it is not opposed to a temporary roof that touches the earth lightly and does not have a visually solid storage box / rail.

There seems to be no assessment of useful life / maintenance of awning, nor viability in wind both with regard to stability and flapping sound when the awning is raised. HAC has not commented on the possible restrictions on stage visibility when the awning is raised.



HAC aim 8

Suitable for waterproof storage and 'Green Room'; under the stage

HAC proposal

The key issue is that the present stage structure, comprising treated pine piers, timber bearers and flooring of compressed cement sheeting on the stage covered with Emer-Clad waterproof membrane is nearing the end of its economic life. The jointing of the Emer-Clad sheeting needs to be repaired about once a year.

The proposed reinforced concrete stage would have "Xypex within the concrete mix to minimise water leaks" as per the budget price provided by Renew Constructions Pty Ltd.

WBGS comments

The proposed concrete stage is quite a large surface. How is it proposed to be drained with the drain between the stage and the seating carrying all the stage and seating water and where does the run-off water go? How is it proposed to make the sewerage connection for the shower, toilets and green room facilities? Will any concrete component elements be washed off into surrounding landscape or watercourse? The Society seeks an alternative to the concrete block wall and concrete slab floors, which would be detrimental to the retention of the rock boulders.



HAC aim 9

Easy to operate as a theatre, including lighting, audio, weather protection and box office

HAC proposal

A folding awning is proposed. A small platform at street level would offer a site for a ticket desk on event nights with a balustrade clad in vertical timber battens and interpretive signs provided at street level. The draft design plans shows two control desks, the existing bridge across the creek to the second seating area would be replaced, and there would be removable side-support umbrella structures over the ticket information desk and control desk(s). These are all schematic at this stage with no designs detailed.

WBGs comments

Productions need to be catered for within the limitations of the site and its natural setting. Developing the Haven Amphitheatre into a fully operating quasi indoor theatre with state-of-the-art productions appears inappropriate given its scale and context and its historical and cultural heritage significance. An important part of the Haven amphitheatre is its limitations and it is this difference which makes it so special. The proposal in respect of this aim appears to be overly ambitious for a community resource that should remain understated.



HAC aim 10

Durable for the foreseeable future

HAC proposal

The Haven Amphitheatre Committee believes that while the current stage may have another 5–10 years life, it estimates that maintenance would cost \$782,000 over next 10 years. Nett long term maintenance needs to be balanced with construction costs. HAC is also concerned that the culture of community self-help that enabled the stage to be rebuilt in early 1990s has changed. In its view, today's new residents are not prepared to put in time on voluntary building work, nor are there new faces coming forward to help with the planning and staging of events at the venue. Moreover, today's OH&S regulations mean that key work areas such as construction and electrical work need to be undertaken by accredited personnel.

WBGs comments

The estimated maintenance cost of \$782,000 over next 10 years appears to an over-estimation particularly given "The stage and undercroft are generally in a fair state of repair ..." (p10).

Conversely, the advantages of concrete are presented in optimistic terms. As discussed above, concrete will also deteriorate with time and possibly more quickly if it gets concrete cancer. Council is well aware of the expense involved in rectification works in such circumstances, given its experience with the concrete chimney flue of the Willoughby Incinerator. Another illustration of even more expensive rectification works is the MLC Centre in the city designed by Harry Seidler. The exterior pre-cast concrete elements have areas of honeycomb despite being made under controlled conditions off site. This is causing concrete cancer and there is now, just over 30 years after the building was completed, an extensive maintenance program costing millions of dollars.

The challenges of a reinforced concrete construction on this site also need in-depth assessment. Concrete reinforcement needs to have at least 25mm of concrete covering it. If the reinforcing gets too close to the surface there is a propensity to decay. To achieve this in the small steep and uneven gully would be considerably more difficult for a builder than in a regular site or off site prefabrication.

The concerns that HAC have about new residents not being prepared to put in time on voluntary building work, nor with the planning and staging of events, could equally apply to audience numbers which could also dwindle. If that happened, under this proposal the glen would be left with a decaying concrete bunker. We sincerely hope that audiences do not dwindle, but the long term and the unforeseen must be considered. Accordingly, whatever is constructed should be easy to remove in order to leave the glen in its beautiful natural state undamaged.

Other important aims

Given the natural, social, historic and cultural heritage significance of the site, there are other aspects that need to be included as aims of the project.

Additional aim 1

To touch the earth lightly

WBGs comments

The Griffins had a deep respect for the natural landscape. This respect was clearly shown at the Haven Amphitheatre where they left the bush and “little stream” intact, used the rocks as stage platforms and didn’t build a stage.

A core concern of committee members is that the core concept that any man-made structures in the glen/dell should respect its natural landscape with sympathetic construction that touches the earth lightly. In 20 years time or 100 years time when the structure and stage decay, it should be able to be repaired or removed without damage to the natural beauty and ecology of the site. In short, the delicate and sensitive nature of the glen should not be disfigured by an unsympathetic structure and /or construction methods.

The Prometheus rock described by Marion Mahony Griffin in *The Magic of America* (see photograph below) is largely concealed, but intact under the existing stage. The top of the Prometheus rock is just evident at the same level as the existing stage in the eastern corner. Accordingly, a particular concern is that the proposed concrete structure, and also the western footing of the proposed canopy, would necessitate the destruction of this very significant rock.



LEFT: Looking from near the Demeter Rock towards the Prometheus Rock at the southern end of the stage.

Additional aim 2

Respect the natural, historic, social and cultural heritage of the site

WBGS comments

The Griffins dedicated the Haven Amphitheatre site to the public for use by the community of their day and all future generations. Their overarching philosophy was based on respect for the beauty of the natural environment.

As Marion Mahony Griffin described in *The Magic of America* “Let us first glimpse the valley itself, over 200 feet of its height in view - the water of the harbor below with often the wake of the moon, and sometimes the whole play illuminated by the full moon.

“The West slope of the valley - the audience seated on terraces faced with the local stone, no backs, the audience sitting through two hours unconscious of that fact, entranced by the plays. Sometimes a shooting star in the Eastern sky timed, it seemed, to fit some dramatic point.

“The rest of the valley is the stage, trees and bush and blossoms and rocks to meet any dramatic requirement. To the North a steep rock wall with a long terrace - a road in fact above the eye running East and West. Above it terrace on terrace of spectacular rocks and shrubbery and grand trees. To the East a flat terrace above the eye so scenes can appear and disappear across it, mysterious or spectacular. Then the little stream flowing down to the sea, its head and its further bank offering a rich range of settings - terraces, huge boulders, exquisite varied shrubbery - dainty Lily of the Valley trees and majestic Angophoras and so on.”

Also reported in *The Magic of America* “... The Sydney Herald commented:- ‘The choruses took up their groupings among the bush and greenery with complete confidence. At times the effect of all the illuminated figures in eloquent poses was dream-like and almost incredible like that of a highly imaginative painting. One thought of Fra Angelico and his multitudes of angels. The acoustics of the dell were remarkably good. Every word carried clearly even from the most distant crag.’”

Willoughby City Council’s Griffin Reserves Castlecrag Plan of Management, prepared in 1997, states under the heading “Role / significance” that the Haven Amphitheatre is “An outstanding feature of the Griffin estates which demonstrates the Griffins’ interests in community life, the benefits of detailed site examination as an input to estate planning, and use which respects the natural landscape” (see Annexure A)

The timber stage designed by Robert Sheldon and built by the community in the 1970s is also of historic, social and cultural significance.

Our view is that a heritage report should have informed the design of the proposal in its early stages. While the HAC has considered the natural environment to an extent, such a report, backed by a comprehensive whole site survey of the natural features of the site, would have guided any design proposal towards a more appropriate outcome. We understand that Willoughby City Council has recently done such a site survey of the trees, seating and road etc, as part of the DA preparation process. We trust the site survey includes all the major rocks and creek as well.



LEFT: seating photographed in the 1936 program for the Anthroposophical Society’s Michael Festival. Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc Collection, courtesy Bim Hilder.

Additional aim 3

To assess the viability of existing structure

WBGS comments

As the HAC proposal states “The stage and undercroft are generally in a fair state of repair but there is evidence of timber rot in areas, particularly around previous repairs. The stage platform shows indications of water ingress into the sheeting” (p10). The existing structure is essentially stable, and not sinking or leaning.

Prior to any detailed design work, preparations should include first and foremost a structural assessment report of the existing structure prepared by an independent consultant.

The main structure is treated pine (including many huge and solid logs) and should be reused where possible. New timber poles could be carried in to the site without the need of a crane or a large building site construction area. The existing structure should be reused and the proposed oval stage form could be created with a few new timber posts and by cantilevering the deck from the new posts and the existing posts.

Waterproofing of the stage platform could be created by using pavers / tiles (in a recessive colour and texture) with a waterproof adhesive. The compressed cement sheets already on the stage platform are intended for tiling such as in lightweight flooring for bathrooms and kitchens. Suitable pavers / tiles could be such as those used by Sydney City Council for street paving in Harris Street, Pyrmont, or by the Australian National Maritime Museum at its outdoor cafe that opened last year. As stated in the proposal, rubber matting can be used to create some give in the surface of the stage if required (p11).



ABOVE: Paving laid in 2011 in Harris Street, Pyrmont

BELOW: Australian National Maritime Museum outdoor café paving laid in 2011

Conclusion

The commitment and dedication of the HAC to the future of the amphitheatre is admirable and the Walter Burley Griffin Society appreciates this.

The Society is not opposed to an oval shaped stage platform. The Society supports the desire for a new stage platform and lightweight removable canopy over part of the stage, but urges that they be built from materials and construction methods that touch the earth lightly and can be removed in the future leaving the Haven glen intact as the Griffins found it. The proposed stage, undercroft area and weatherproof awning would touch the earth very heavily and be detrimental to the glen and its natural beauty and heritage including the bushland, trees, rocks and creek.

Preparations should include first and foremost a structural assessment report of the existing structure prepared by an independent consultant. Other reports including a heritage impact statement, environmental impact statement, a visual impact statement and a disabled access report should be prepared.

Honoring and paying tribute to Howard Rubie and his commitment to the amphitheatre's program of performances, community and audiences that spans more than 30 years, is very worthy. Howard Rubie was a founding member of the Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc in 1988 and made a great contribution to its work for over 14 years.

We understand that the Haven Amphitheatre Committee will be disappointed that the Society is not supportive of the proposed concrete construction especially as a considerable amount of work has already put into the proposal. However the Society is also disappointed that it was not consulted earlier by the Haven Amphitheatre Committee prior to the formulation of the concept.

The Haven Amphitheatre is a unique space for both the performer and the audience. There is no other amphitheatre like it in the world. Its uniqueness, irregularities, idiosyncrasies and natural bushland beauty need to be preserved and not compromised by new development.

Any proposal for redeveloping the Haven Amphitheatre needs to completely respect the natural landforms, rocks, creek, trees and bushland of the site, and ensure they are not damaged in any way. In 100 years time when any new structure has decayed, it needs to be able to be removed leaving the glen uncompromised in its natural splendour. Thus the Society does not support the current proposal of the Haven Amphitheatre Committee as the proposed concrete structure, associated works and construction methods required by the proposed materials is not respectful or sympathetic to the natural glen, would result in significant damage to the glen, would destroy the timber stage, and bears little reverence to the Griffins. The proposal would be detrimental to the natural, historic, social and cultural heritage of the site.

The Society hopes that the reports it has recommended be obtained will give rise to a better solution with appropriate respect for the heritage significance for the site.



LEFT: Photo from Marion Mahony Griffin's *The Magic of America*

The Walter Burley Griffin Society looks forward to collaborating with The Haven Amphitheatre Committee and Willoughby City Council to achieve a better solution with appropriate respect for the heritage significance for the site.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kerry McKillop'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kerry McKillop
Secretary

cc: The General Manager, Willoughby City Council
The Mayor, Willoughby City Council
Cr Gail Giles-Gidney, HAC Committee Member
The Secretary, Castlecrag Progress Association
The Secretary, Castlecrag Conservation Society

Griffin Reserves Plan of Management : Inventory Form

Name Haven Amphitheatre	Address The Bulwark, cnr The Barricade	Reference R-14 page 1
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System

A site set aside in the original plan for its potential to create a functional amphitheatre for community use. Built in the early 1930s and restored in the 1980s. Part of the natural drainage system. Formally part of the Castlehaven reserve, the amphitheatre also occupies part of the road reservation adjoining the reserve.

Description

A small reserve (technically part of the Castlehaven Reserve) - located in a moist south east facing gully, the natural landform adapted to use as an informal amphitheatre with tiers of freestone retained terraces below which cover some of the road reserve area along The Scarp and The Barricade frontages.

The amphitheatre function has been upgraded to include a deck/stage with some storage and technical services below. There are no toilet facilities.

The reserve is the only one in Castlecrag that has a Council Community Advisory Committee. There is a natural seasonal drainage line down the centre between the north east and south west facing slopes.

There is a healthy cover of the Sydney moist gully plant species with several stands of the slender tree fern. The slopes have rock outcrops, and there is a drop down to the steeper terrain of Castlehaven below.

Informal track access to below was traditionally through the private undeveloped #1 The Scarp (now built on), since this was removed (by the development of the site) the Haven has been used instead and informal tracks have developed. Now that the pathway is constructed between #5 & #7 The Scarp, action should be taken to 'close' and rehabilitate the tracks.

Bush regeneration has been undertaken by members of the Haven Amphitheatre Committee, qualified in bush regeneration over the past two years.

Cultural features

Haven Amphitheatre and associated structures.

Existing access

From The Barricade and The Bulwark. Residents have suggested the improvement of access via the foreshore from Rockley Street, Sailors Bay Park, Castlehaven Reserve and the pathway between # 3 & 5 The Barricade which used to be accessible in the past.

Michael Lehany, Meredith Walker, + Associates for Willoughby Council 1996

Griffin Reserves Plan of Management : Inventory Form

Existing Maintenance
Haven Amphitheatre committee

**Haven
Amphitheatre**

page 2

Residents concerns

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE NO.2, AND RELATED COMMENTS/ LETTERS NOS 2, 20

LINDY BATTERHAM, 167 Edinburgh Road, Access to theatre desirable by track, from Rockley Street through to Sailors Bay Park, and from the bay. [Parking can be provided at SailorsBay Reserve]

HAVEN AMPHITHEATRE, Lisa Purser (secretary), Box 6, Edinburgh Road, have had three year bush regeneration scheme, suggest opening up of bush track - Rockley Street to Barricade giving access to Haven for pedestrians and a walk through historic Walter Burley Griffin Estate.

Issues and concerns

Need for some minor improvement to theatre facilities - storage, toilets, security.
Maintenance of bushland.
Access.

Role / significance

An outstanding feature of the Griffin estates which demonstrates the Griffins' interests in community life, the benefits of detailed site examination as an input to estate planning, and use which respects the natural landscape .

Recommended Management Policy

Use: Amphitheatre, and associated activities with minimal change to consolidate existing facilities; no increase in the site coverage of structures; passive recreation; bushland.

Access: Discourage emerging tracks becoming permanent Investigate possible access via designated pathway between #3 & 5 The Barricade, to facilitate parking for events at the amphitheatre..

Landscape character: maintain existing character. Minimise works to natural drainage system.

Vegetation: bush regeneration, involving those who use amphitheatre.

Cultural features: retain and conserve original amphitheatre structure.

Priorities for action

1. Rehabilitation of informal tracks.
2. Continued maintenance and repair of amphitheatre.
3. Access.

Michael Lehany, Meredith Walker, + Associates for Willoughby Council 1996