

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sir Robert Helpmann Immortalized

The Sir Robert Helpmann Theatre is ready to undergo an artistic makeover with funds allocated by the State Government for critical upgrades to regional theatres.

As part of the bold design, the 30 metre high fly-tower will come to life with a giant portrait of the theatre's namesake Sir Robert Helpmann.

New zinc panels fixed to a metal structure will clad the building's outer skin to form a protective barrier that will prevent further weather damage.

The City of Mount Gambier and co-tenant Country Arts SA have spent several months investigating potential solutions to safeguard the iconic 34 year old building after signs of deterioration.

Mount Gambier architectural firm Chapman Herbert Architects was awarded the tender after winning an architectural design competition last year.

Sir Robert Helpmann Theatre manager Frank Morello said the fly-tower's artistic treatment would add to the precinct's growing reputation as the city's cultural centre.

"While it was imperative to fix the structural issues associated with the panels, implementing an innovative solution is a fantastic outcome for the Civic Centre and Mount Gambier," Mr Morello said.

"The exterior of the building will now reflect the creative and artistic activities that occur on the theatre's stage, including a portrait of Sir Robert Helpmann - a fitting tribute to an international artist who began his life in Mount Gambier."

Sir Robert 'Bobby' Helpmann is the logical choice for inspiring the artwork on the fly tower. As an internationally acclaimed ballet dancer, actor, producer, director and choreographer, the local boy made good has also been the inspiration for the establishment of the Helpmann Academy and was Artistic Director of the Adelaide Festival from 1970 – 76.

Country Arts SA will contribute half the cost of this upgrade from the Government-allocated money and the City of Mount Gambier council, who share the building, will contribute the other half.

Media enquiries: Joy Lothian Joy.Lothian@countryarts.org.au or (08) 8444 0417 / 0423 828 035

