

Heritage Citation



Methodist Church (former)

Key details

Also known as	Stoliarsky School of Music, The Music Box Theatre
Addresses	At 19 Dornoch Terrace, West End, Queensland 4101
Type of place	Church, Theatre
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Carpenter Gothic
Lot plan	L5_RP11261
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002 Date of Citation — October 2006

Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
People/associations	Arthur Morry (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

This building was originally constructed in 1888 as a church for the Hill End Primitive Methodist congregation. Arthur Morry, politician, architect and lay preacher, designed the church and was heavily involved with the church's activities, even after he became Mayor of South Brisbane in 1890. The church was originally built in Grey Street but was moved to its present location in Dornoch Terrace in 1914. Due to declining numbers in the postwar period, the church closed, and in 1971 the building was sold to trustees of the Light Opera Music Company who converted the hall into a musical theatre known as The Music Box. Since the 1980s the hall has operated as the Stoliarsky School of Music.

History

By the mid 1880s, South Brisbane and West End were densely settled areas, and residential development had begun to occur towards Hill End. As the residential population of this part of the South Brisbane peninsular continued to grow, new community services were demanded by the young families that had settled there. The small Primitive Methodist population of the locality was forced to travel to the West End church to worship, and eventually enough supporters were found to establish a local place of worship. Subscriptions were invited to raise funds and a site was purchased in Gray Road, on the left hand side near Montague Road. A well attended stump capping ceremony raised more funds, and the church was opened with relatively little debt in February of 1888.

Primitive Methodists made up only a small proportion of Brisbane's population late last century - in 1881, just 1.78% of the population were either Primitive Methodists or from the United Methodists Free Church. Five years later these church numbers had risen to 2.2%. Despite the small size of the Primitive Methodist community in Brisbane, it was committed to establishing local places of worship.

The church was designed by lay preacher of the Primitive Methodist Church, politician and architect, Arthur Morry. Morry's best known extant work is the Hebrew Synagogue, Margaret Street (1884-86). Mr Morry had designed and supervised the construction of a Presbyterian Church on Wickham Terrace in 1888 and was able to retrieve the old pews from the church it was replacing for use at Hill End.

Morry, who lived on Gray Road, was actively involved in the Hill End Church as he became more actively involved in politics. In 1887 he had been elected to the Woolloongabba Divisional Board and held the office of Alderman of the succeeding South Brisbane Municipal Council. When in 1890 he was elected Mayor of South Brisbane, the congregation recorded its honour in having "the first citizen of the municipality" regularly worshipping among them. In July 1890 he was elected to represent South Brisbane in the Legislative Assembly, serving until 1893. Morry was described as a humanitarian who frequently used his oratorical skills for evangelical and temperance causes. He became Chairman of the South Brisbane Local Flood Relief Committee,

which was established following the disastrous floods of 1893.

It may have been due to Morry's influence that the church played a vital role in providing flood relief in 1893. It just escaped the flood waters, but several properties nearby were swept away, and the church grounds were used to display goods rescued from the flood waters for identification.

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In 1914 the church was moved to its present location in Dornoch Terrace, Hill End. It is not clear why the church was moved. However, the building has now occupied its Dornoch Terrace site for more than 80 years - three times longer than it lasted at Gray Road.

As the population of Hill End changed and as religious observance in general diminished during the second half of the twentieth century, the congregation of the Hill End Church began to decline in numbers. In the late 1960s the Methodist Church made the difficult decision to close the church, its congregation once again having to travel to West End to worship.

This heralded a new phase in the history of the building, beginning what has become a thirty- year association with music. In 1971 the former church was sold to trustees for the Queensland Light Opera Company which converted the building into The Music Box, a musical theatre. Performances were staged in the top floor theatre, which was entered from the street; the middle floor housed club and function rooms; and the Company's costumes were stored on the lower floor. Regular performances were held, and audiences from all over Brisbane came to know and love the building. Eventually the Company out-grew the Hill End theatre, and moved to Her Majesty's Theatre in the city. In 1986 new owners established the Stoliarsky School of Music in the building, and since that time hundreds of music students have received training and performed concerts in the former church.

Description

This former church on Dornoch Terrace, Hill End, is situated on a narrow corner block next to a row of shops. The building's ecclesiastical character has been retained except for several signs which identify its current use. Clad in chamfer and vertical joint boards, with a corrugated iron roof, the building is an example of a Federation Carpenter Gothic style church.

As the land slopes steeply away from Dornoch Terrace, only the top floor, which comprises the original church building can be seen from the street. This floor includes the central nave (now a concert hall), entry porch and two small offices which were possibly the original vestry rooms to the back. The two lower floors sit below street level, comprising various teaching rooms, storage space and toilets. Entry to the nave can be made through the front entry porch, through a side entry door or via a flight of timber stairs at the back of the building. These stairs also access the lower floors and yard.

Exterior

The steeply pitched gable roof over the nave is crowned with four, equally spaced roof vents, with a timber finial to each gable end. The smaller rooms to the rear of the building have skillion roofs whilst the porch has a lower gable. Centrally located within the symmetrical front facade, the enclosed porch is clad in narrow weatherboards and a band of fibre cement sheeting with cover strips giving a half-timbered effect. This effect is repeated in the nave gable, above a line of timber dentils.

The building has a row of small leadlight lancet windows along each side wall and one to each side of the entry porch on its front facade. These consist of a pointed arch timber frame encompassing a fixed fanlight and single casement. The front facade of the building also features a large semi-circular window above the porch. A circular window is located in the opposite rear gable wall. The remaining windows in the offices and lower floors are double-hung, framed in timber or aluminium, some incorporating air conditioning units.

Set back slightly from the top floor, the walls of the lower two floors have an exposed timber frame with internal vertical joint boards or fibre cement sheeting. This structure has been reinforced externally with steel framing including footings, posts and bearers, and is used in conjunction with a few concrete stumps and timber bearers. General maintenance including painting and minor repairs is needed.

Interior

The interior of the nave and porch are lined with tongue and groove, vertical joint boards to walls and ceiling. These are broken with a timber dado and cornice. Diagonally laid boards feature in the gable ends. The main roof structure consists of a set of three rafters with collar beam and tie rods. The timber floor is carpeted, and a stage has been placed over the original sanctuary. Above this, a wall has been built to enclose the roof space. Other notable changes to the interior include lighting, ceiling fans and plastic seats. No original furniture remains.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history as it provides evidence of the early development of Hill End and the changing nature of the area.

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history for the evidence it provides of the commitment of early Primitive Methodists to establishing a local church, and the importance of religious observance in the nineteenth century.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as a surviving example of a small, 1880s Victorian Carpenter Gothic style timber framed church.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons for the important part it has played in the lives of successive generations of worshippers, performers, audiences and students of music.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

for its long association with the local Methodist community, as well as architect and Mayor of South Brisbane, Arthur Morry.

References

1. Crook, D.P. Aspects of Brisbane Society in the 1880s, thesis, University of Queensland, 1958
 2. Dingle, Rev R.S.C. 1947, *Annals of Achievement: A Review of Queensland Methodism 1847-1943*, Queensland Book Depot, Brisbane
 3. Huff, E. (Queensland Light Opera Company member and performer), Telephone Interview, 4 October 1996
 4. *Queensland Methodist Times*, 20 October 1938
 5. Queensland Titles Office Records
 6. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994
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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and

information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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