



# PRECINCT REDEVELOPMENT

## Dame Malvina Major visits Hawke's Bay Opera House



Dame Malvina Major pictured from left to right with Mayor Sandra Hazlehurst and Councillor Malcolm Dixon.

A very special guest in the form of acclaimed Opera singer Dame Malvina Major paid an unexpected visit to the Hawke's Bay Opera House on Thursday to see for herself the tremendous work going on behind the scenes to bring the much loved venue back to life.

Dame Malvina's international opera career has included 28 major operatic roles, and an extensive oratorio and concert repertoire and discography of commercial recordings.

Dame Malvina now lives in New Zealand, supporting the work of the Dame Malvina Major Foundation which helps talented young performing artists to achieve their potential through financial assistance, performance opportunities, and professional guidance.

### Our House Update

The Hawke's Bay Opera House has ignited the imagination of many local artists who have now become nationally and internationally recognised.

One such artist is Thomas Oliver, an award-winning singer-songwriter known for his tender vocals, engaging demeanor on stage, and his slide guitar playing skills.

With millions of views and streams across different platforms, Thomas has developed an international audience from his home base in New Zealand, and has performed throughout New Zealand, in Australia, Europe and Vietnam, sharing the stage with such legends as Joe Cocker, Eric Clapton and Fat Freddy's Drop.

To see a video of when we recently caught up with Thomas Oliver please visit our Facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/hawkesbayoperahouse](http://www.facebook.com/hawkesbayoperahouse)



Photo credit: Terry Longley and Michelle Davies

If you have a story to tell about your experience with 'OUR HOUSE' please contact Daniel Betty [danielb@hdc.govt.nz](mailto:danielb@hdc.govt.nz). We would love to hear from you.

## Redevelopment Progress

### OPERA HOUSE

- Shear walls to grid H complete.
- Structural steel installation to first floor female toilet complete.
- Plaster repairs 75% complete to north wall.
- Wall linings and finishings 95% complete to ground floor foyer.
- Framing to stage diaphragm.
- South tower shear walls underway.
- Remedial works and re-spouting street canopy underway.
- First floor linings underway in foyer.

### MUNICIPAL BUILDING

- The break out of the old foundations in preparation of the foundations for the new shear walls (internally and externally) is 80% complete.
- The glazed Heretaunga Street façade has been removed to allow for the internal break out of the old foundations.
- The re-instatement of all services in the lane-way between the Municipal Building and Opera House Theatre is 90% complete.

### PLAZA

- Progress is being made on the primary structure of the new building with the back columns now in place.
- The foundations of the front columns have been poured and the columns are scheduled to arrive on site in early in March.
- The ground is being prepared for the foundations of the remainder of the building foot print.



The new Hawke's Bay Opera House accessibility ramp and balustrade.

## Sometimes you meet the most amazing people . . .

Meet Zelda Houston, daughter to Hec Spence, custodian of the Hawke's Bay Opera House from 1946 to 1964. Daniel Betty recently caught up with her for a cup of tea.

*Knock, knock, knock*

**Daniel:** Hi Zelda, my name's...

**Zelda:** Daniel, nice to meet you come in, come in.

**Daniel:** Thanks

We make small talk and Zelda comments on the fact that I have walked from the office and not driven. She has recently lost her licence (Zelda is 90 years old) and this has affected how she lives. She goes to the dining table and grabs some photos and newspaper articles.

**Zelda:** Here's Dad and his brother Ralph. They worked together most of the time building sets. They learnt quite a bit from building on the stage.

**Daniel:** Wow, this looks amazing, how did Hec get into working for the Opera House?

**Zelda:** Dad didn't go to war as he had three kids. He wanted to but wasn't allowed. So he stayed home and drove trucks. He would drive from the railway station to shops throughout Hastings dropping off goods. His favourite was picking up sets and taking them to the Opera House. He would stay longer and help build the sets so he could listen to the music and meet the actors.



That was his favourite thing meeting the actors and sometimes inviting them over for breakfast! We used to love this as kids and we made so many friends over the years... in fact one of them came to my wedding!

I don't know exactly how he got the job but it felt like he had been there long before he started officially.

**Daniel:** Was your father ever enticed to go on the stage and perform?

**Zelda:** Oh no, not at all but he loved standing in the wings watching and dancing all night. Sometimes he would not get home until the early hours and then go back into work by 9.00am to let the company back in. In the 50's he asked Mum to move into the theatre so they could be together.

**Daniel:** Really? That's fantastic where was he going to sleep?

**Zelda:** There was a room right at the top of the front of the theatre. It went up a long winding set of stairs

**Daniel:** I know the space... *We talked like this for an hour sharing stories over a cup of tea...*

**Daniel:** Zelda I am not sure how yet but we would like to explore options of how to celebrate your father somewhere in the theatre.

**Zelda:** That would be pretty special and something that I know would make my family very happy.

**Daniel:** Tell you what...when the theatre opens we will definitely have a celebration. I would like to invite you and your family.

**Zelda:** That would be great. I will invite my brother. He is in Australia but would love to come.

**Thank you Zelda for sharing your story and telling us about your father. It was a pleasure to talk and we look forward to our next cup of tea in the near future.**

