



# THEATRICAL REINVENTION

A new generation of movie and theatre-goers can now enjoy a restored and refurbished Capitol Theatre.

**C**apitol Theatre reopened its doors to the public in May 2015, more than a decade after bidding adieu to cinema patrons in the late 1990s. The building has been rejuvenated to become a multi-purpose venue for events, and will even see cinema and theatre-goers once more. It is part of a bigger redevelopment project called Capitol Singapore that also comprises two other conserved buildings, the Capitol Building and Stamford House.

## Classic origins

Together with Capitol Building and Stamford House, the neo-classical style Capitol Theatre is a prominent landmark in the Civic District where many of Singapore's historic buildings are located.

Built in 1929 and conserved in 2007, Capitol Theatre and Capitol Building used to be known as the Namazies Building, owned by the Namazie family who were businessmen and lawyers of Persian origin. It was originally designed as a theatre to host live shows and featured popular local artistes like Sakura Teng and Rita Chao. In 1946, the Namazie family sold Capitol Theatre and Capitol Building to the Shaw Organisation and the theatre was converted to a 1,688-seat cinema.

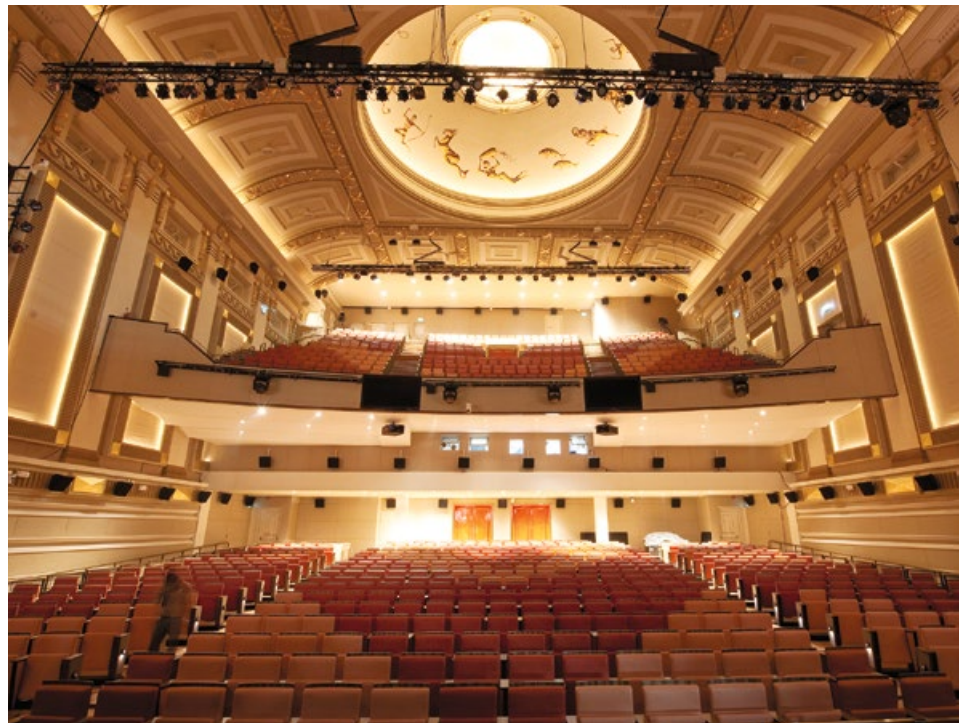
In fact, Capitol Theatre was one of Singapore's premier picture places in the 1950s and 1960s. Retiree John Ng, 73, remembers the theatre fondly as he would occasionally bring his then-girlfriend-and-now-wife for special dates. "In those days, there were not many places to 'paktor'. A trip to Capitol Theatre was a real treat!"

Significant features of the theatre include the vault roof with a circular dome embellished with the twelve zodiac signs, interior decorative elements such as a richly detailed plaster proscenium frame and sculptures of winged horses and their riders that flank both sides of the stage. These prominent features continue to imbue the theatre with classic charm.

### Adaptive reuse for a grand dame

Despite Capitol Theatre's rich history and people's memories of the building, there was a need to modernise the space. Ms Tan Huey Jiun, URA's Director of Conservation Planning says: "Capitol Theatre is special to many people. We really wanted to keep it going but needed to have new uses for it to be sustainable as well. When looking at plans to rejuvenate the place, we wanted the developers to find a balance between preserving its rich history and updating it for today's audience."

The Capitol Theatre site, together with three adjacent ones, was put up for comprehensive redevelopment on the Reserve List under the Government Land Sales Programme in 2008. URA oversaw the tender that was launched in



2010 with the help of a Concept Evaluation Panel comprising representatives from the private sector and government agencies. The tender was awarded to the developer using a Concept and Price revenue tender system, which allows for competition on both concept and price, and for the Evaluation Panel to assess the quality of the proposed development as part of the tender evaluation process.

Top:  
The Capitol Theatre's fittings have been refurbished and restored for a new era

To protect the theatre's heritage, we had mandated that Capitol Theatre be restored for use as an arts or entertainment-related performance facility such as a theatre or cinema. We also required the developer to facilitate pedestrian movement by constructing a direct underground pass to the adjacent City Hall MRT station.

When the entire integrated development is open in the near future, our vision for the place will finally be realised — to build on the remarkable history of Capitol Theatre, transform it into a new lifestyle destination within the Civic District with a complementary mix of hotel, retail and dining uses, and strengthen the current arts and cultural positioning of the Bras Basah Bugis precinct.



Top:  
Capitol Theatre in 1965