

18 December 2009

OPEN LETTER TO HERITAGE VANCOUVER MEMBERS

It is with much regret that I inform the members of Heritage Vancouver that the Pantages Theatre Arts Society has lost its three-year struggle to preserve and restore the 102-year old Pantages Theatre. We came within a whisker of success but were derailed by City staff recommending further study rather than a real decision.

Throughout the process, we advised staff and politicians at all levels of government that timing was critical as the Pantages Theatre was deteriorating rapidly and there soon could not be much to preserve, never mind restore. Alas, this has proven to be the case. There was a fire set on the roof of the building in May, 2009; firefighters chopped through the roof to ensure there were no lingering flames. The complete stage area has now collapsed into the basement; the balconies are no longer safe to walk on; and the structural members supporting the front of the theatre are now splitting. It is no longer possible to enter the building safely to retrieve any of the remaining heritage elements. Truth, folks, we have not gained access to the theatre since August 2009 and will not likely be able to do so at any time in the future because of liability issues.

Heritage Vancouver has worked extremely hard over many years to preserve this heritage site. It and its members, individually and collectively, have worked with our Society over the past three years recognizing our joint interests in this site and the potential that the restored theatre could achieve for economic, social, artistic and heritage objectives in the heart of the city. For this, I thank you all on behalf of the members and Board of the Pantages Theatre Arts Society.

We are not going to give up our fight to achieve the goal of renewing the DTES that the restored Pantages might have brought to fruition. And, I am sure you will not give up your struggle to preserve Vancouver's past for future generations.

Again, I thank you all for the out-pouring of support, for the many letters and e-mails sent to City Council and others and for the time and energy you all give to stop the future from obliterating the past.

Peter Fairchild
Chair
Pantages Theatre Arts Society