



Subject: The 'People's Gospel Mission Hall'/Fresh Youth Academy' hall

Dear All Above who are concerned with the plans to turn the 'People's Gospel Mission Hall' / Fresh Youth Academy' hall into two private houses,

Both international and local musicians have written to you expressing their dismay at the plans to remove the hall from community use. They have sent their letters to me to collect and pass on to you. I include five of them below. They eloquently express some of the reasons why so many people in the area treasure the hall and feel such horror, sadness and anger at the thought of its being destroyed:

1) From **Nicola Moonen**, an internationally renowned musician who lives locally:

"This little hall is a hidden gem in our neighborhood.

As a musician I can say that this space has fabulous acoustics. It is perfectly set up for concerts of chamber music. It provides the intimacy that is so crucial for the appreciation of classical music. It is also a perfect rehearsal space.

It can be used for all genres of music. It is ideal for children's performances. Young people can use it for creating music. It even has a music studio.

The hall was refurbished in 2015 and now has first class facilities.

It breaks my heart and fills me with incomprehension that a Labour council could be responsible for the demolition of this very special place that was explicitly left to the community.

What the hall needs is good management so that the community as a whole can use it. It is not a building to sell off for its land for the purpose of building two luxury homes. We have enough of those in our area!

Please stop these plans immediately.

Nicolette Moonen

Director of The Bach Players

Professor of baroque violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London'

2) From **Orlando Gough**, internationally renowned musician, composer and director:

'The People's Gospel Mission Hall has a very unusual and beautiful acoustic which is characteristic of late Victorian halls of this size. It is about 0.7 seconds long, and has a warmth and clarity that make it ideal for singing, in particular for choirs, and chamber music. This clarity makes it suitable also for speech, which travels easily across the space so that it is possible to speak quietly and be heard clearly throughout the hall – useful when leading a class.

I don't know of any other halls in this part of North London which have such an excellent acoustic. It seems to me that, even on this limited criterion, it has immense value both architecturally and practically and should be preserved.'

3) From Rob Harris, an acoustics expert:

'..... the hall has characteristics that would contribute to a good acoustic for unamplified music and the balance between reverberation and clarity that you describe.

These include:

1 The overall volume, with a relatively high ceiling, increasing reverberance.

2 The relatively narrow rectangular plan, typical of many good recital spaces. The narrowness ensures good early lateral sound reflections, which are important in the appreciation of unamplified music.

3 The roof form in section, which appears in successful concert halls and recital spaces such as Snape Maltings and the Jacqueline du Pre recital hall at St. Hilda's College Oxford.

4 The sound diffusion provided by the windows etc.

5 The timber floor and the generally sound reflective surfaces.

Rob Harris (BSc MSc CEng FEng FIOA),
Auditorium acoustic designer.

4) From **Nicola Hadley**, a local musician who has played in the hall:

'As a local musician (piano, accordion, voice) I would like to express my dismay at the proposal to demolish the 'People's Gospel Mission Hall' (now called the 'Fresh Youth Academy' hall) situated within the present Highgate Newtown Community Centre.

The FYA hall is a medium sized space with its own stage, perfect for a whole variety of activities and especially for music and the spoken word. The acoustics are unusually favourable – even unique – for small to medium music groups and for medium sized groups, such as the Pilates group to which I belong. Our teacher can communicate with the whole group (roughly 20 people) without raising her voice, but instead conveying an atmosphere of calm concentration.

The dimensions, the natural lighting and the perfect acoustics also make this hall welcoming to youth groups, affording them sufficient space for their various activities but sufficient closeness to foster friendships. There is none of that “institutional boom” but rather a very special space which we should cherish. It would be tragic to lose this irreplaceable space to make way for two houses which could be built elsewhere, and I hope this planning decision will be reversed.

Nicola Hadley'

5) From Richard Cryan, local musician:

'As a regular user of the hall at the Bertram Street Community Centre, I would like to see it continue in its present role. As a musician, I think it is an exceptional venue; it has a good sized stage for small groups and ensembles. The size of the hall and quality of its acoustics makes it particularly suitable

for unamplified music, and the location also means it would not constitute a noise nuisance for low-level amplified performances. Surely it would make economic sense for it to be promoted as such a venue, rather than demolish it, or change its use, as it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find another such space.

Richard Cryan'



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