

CONCEPT DOCUMENT AND PRELIMINARY BUSINESS PLAN

The George Music, Arts and Conference Centre serving
The Garden Route



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THE GEORGE MUSIC, ARTS, AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

SERVING THE GARDEN ROUTE, WESTERN CAPE V4 7 JUL 2026

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1. Executive Summary

This initial concept document and business plan outlines the approach being taken for the establishment and development of a world-class Music, Arts, and Conference Centre in George, Western Cape. The facility will serve as a hub for cultural expression, professional events, and artistic innovation, catering to local and regional audiences. The action plan of completed and outstanding tasks is contained in the accompanying document: George Music and Arts Centre Implementation Tracker version 1.

The need for this facility is being driven by the desire and need to provide a permanent home for Carpe Musicam! – the community orchestra and choir that over the last eleven years, since founding, has performed concerts at venues around the Garden Route. Addendum A contains an overview of Carpe Musicam!.

It is key to this initiative that a comprehensive needs analysis and feasibility study is done to understand how this facility will be sustainable.

Since the initiation of this project, the George Municipality has advised that they are undertaking a feasibility study into the establishment and development of a large two-thousand-seater conference centre and hotel appealing to local, regional, national and international audiences. A feasibility study is currently underway in this regard. As the municipality has confirmed they will be approaching their project on a Public/Private participation process (PPP), they have indicated this will be a lengthy and time-consuming process.

It is believed that this George Music and Arts Centre will be able to be completed much sooner and will be complimentary in nature to the Municipality's larger initiative and that in the fullness of time, there will be space for both facilities in the Garden Route area.

1.1 Vision Statement

To establish a premier destination for music, arts, and smaller conferences in George, fostering creativity, economic growth, and community engagement across the Garden Route.

1.2 Mission Statement

- Provide a state-of-the-art venue for concerts, exhibitions, weddings and corporate events.
- Support local and emerging artists by offering performance and gallery spaces.
- Drive tourism and economic development in the Garden Route and Western Cape.

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2. Market Analysis

2.1 Industry Overview

The local and regional arts and conference industry is expanding, with a growing demand for multi-purpose venues that cater to concerts, weddings, corporate meetings, product launches, exhibitions, and festivals. The Western Cape is a major tourism and cultural destination; with the recent local and regional growth making George an ideal location for a centre such as this. The Western Cape has been identified as a region targeted for growth in the tourism and leisure industry.

2.2 Target Market

- Artists and performers – local and international musicians, ballet and associated groups, and visual artists.
- Business and corporates – companies seeking high-end conference and event spaces.
- Tourists and cultural enthusiasts – local residents and visitors attending arts festivals and live performances.
- Educational Institutions – Schools and universities needing lecture or performance spaces.
- Individuals looking for high end wedding and other personal event space.

2.3 Competitive Analysis

- Strengths: Unique combination of music, arts, and conference facilities in one venue; central location with superb transport access in the Garden Route; opportunity to attract national events.
- Challenges: Competition from venues in the region, Cape Town and Johannesburg; initial funding requirements; municipal permissions. Competition: other local conference centres; churches and schools; KKNK; smaller conference facilities.
- Opportunities: Collaboration with government (national minister of public works; Western Cape minister of Cultural affairs and Sport; George municipality; Garden Route District Municipality), private investors, and national cultural organizations. The opportunity exists to collaborate with other potential competitors to expand the scope of events that already operate in the region and province.

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3. Business Model

This facility and the ground it is to be built on would be owned by the investors on a shareholder basis and managed by a board of directors, who in turn would appoint a management team or company to run the facility on a day-to-day basis.

As the founding institution, Carpe Musicam! would be enabled to use the facility rent free, for as long as they exist, for performances and rehearsals. In addition, they would have a permanent seat on the board of directors.

For this facility to be sustainable the revenue streams and management company (operating costs) must be clearly understood and maximised and the operating costs must be optimised for efficiency. It is not initially envisaged that the facility would be operationally sustainable for the first three years of operation and therefore sufficient operating costs for that period would need to be included in the capital considerations.

A revenue and operating costing model is contained in the accompanying document: George Music and Arts Centre Operating Cost and Revenue Model version 1.

3.1 Revenue Streams

- Venue Rental – conferences, corporate and personal events such as launch events, and exhibitions (product launches and shows).
- Ticket Sales – live concerts, ballet productions (specifically not small theatre productions so as not to compete with the Arts Theatre), and art exhibitions.
- Sponsorships and grants – partnerships with local and national sponsors.
- Merchandising and concessions – branded merchandise; food, and beverages.
- Workshops and training – music and arts education programs.
- Gallery space rented out for exhibitions both permanent and temporary
- Restaurant; coffee shop and bar operated by an independent operator with a liquor licence.

3.2 Ongoing operating costs

Cost components:

Municipal levies and fees

Electricity, water, sewerage

Salaries and wages for all aspects

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Subscriptions

Building maintenance

Marketing and PR

Travel

Asset depreciation

Auditors and accountants

Capital replacement cost

A separate operating cost model is contained

4. Design and development Plan

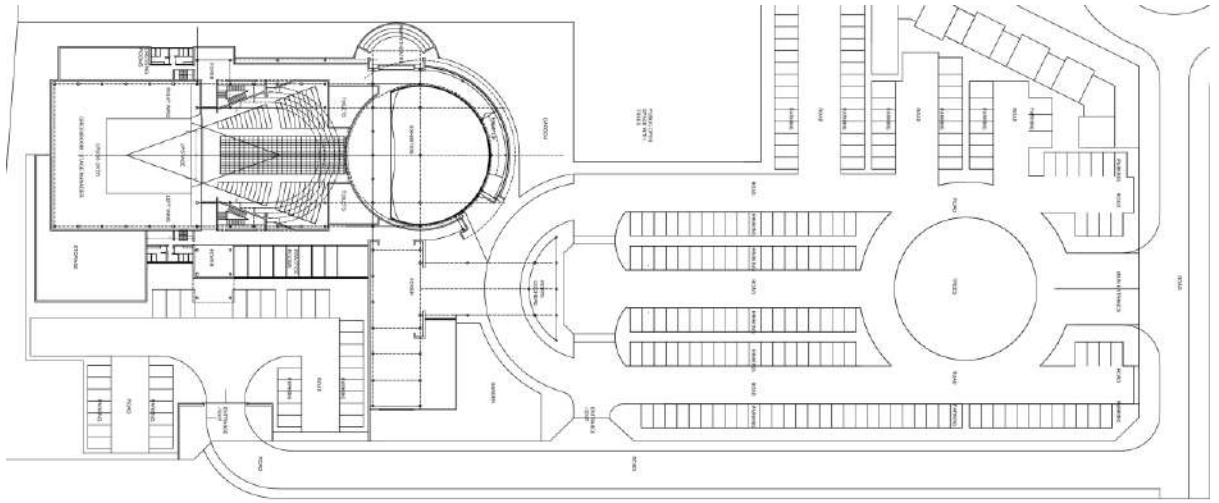
4.1 Facility components

- Two-part stage area for orchestra and choir- individually configurable and movable; space for expansion for inclusion of piped organ. Separate area for grand piano. Cater for up to 60 orchestra and up to 75-100 choir – on tiered stand.
- Main auditorium – seating for 450 guests, acoustically optimized for performances with tiered; movable seating.
- Rooms for music lessons and individual tuition.
- Art gallery and exhibition spaces – rotating exhibitions featuring local and global artists, utilising foyer area for art exhibitions and auditorium area for larger exhibitions and conference.
- Conference rooms and meeting halls – Spaces for conference business meetings/ plenary sessions and seminars.
- Recording Studio and Creative Spaces – Facilities for music and film production.
- Toilets and change rooms for artists.
- Musical equipment storage space.
- Restaurant, coffee shop and bar
- Toilet facilities for visitors.
- Parking.

It is suggested that the experiences of the Hugo Lambrechts music facility in Parow, Cape Town could be explored and learnt from; both in design as well as operation of the facility. Details of the facility can be found in ADDENDUM B.

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A preliminary design has been completed



4.2 Site Selection and Architecture

- Location: George, Western Cape (near main transport routes and tourism hotspots).

The following possible sites have been preliminarily identified and will be explored for ease of availability; zoning considerations (ideally business 1 or 2 with specific consents granted for a place of leisure and or entertainment) and cost.

- Abandoned vandalised site (provincial) Erf 658.
- Site at end of York Street opposite and south-east of new hospital – not currently allocated to a specific purpose according to Robert Janse Van Rensburg, Town planner, available and zoned correctly for the requirements. Confirmed by mayor at initial meeting as being available for development for this purpose – site needs expansion.

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- Site on N2 close to Farmers Market – owned by Cape Estates through their subsidiary Atterbury.
- Olympia land wedding venue and function hall – already built not ideally positioned.
- Deacon – potentially too small and the owner may have other plans for it.
- Design: Modern, sustainable architecture with eco-friendly building constructs.

5. Funding strategy

5.1 Preliminary estimated budget

- Land acquisition (including capital cont.) R10 – R25 million
- Construction costs: R60 – R90 million
- Equipment and Technology: R10 – R25 million
- Marketing and Operations (initial): R10 million
- Total Estimated Investment: R90 – R140 million

5.2 Funding Sources

- Government grants and cultural funding – apply for arts and tourism funding; approach both George and Garden Route municipalities as well as annual provincial funding.
- Private investors and partnerships – engage businesses and philanthropists.
- Lottery fund – apply for funding from lottery fund (discuss not desirable).
- Crowdfunding and community support – involve the public in the funding process (not desirable?).

It is not deemed practical nor desirable to apply for any part of the financing in the form of bank loans that are required to be repaid, however, once the funder is identified, it is envisaged one of the major South African banks will provide the development funding to be repaid by the investor.

6. Marketing and promotion

6.1 Branding and positioning

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- Market the venue as a cultural landmark and premier event space in the Garden Route region of the Western Cape.
- Build partnerships with local and national artists; businesses and cultural organizations.

6.2 Digital and Traditional Marketing

- Website and social media – Promote events, showcase artists, and sell tickets online.
- Media campaigns – Utilize print, radio, and TV for brand awareness.
- Tourism collaborations – Work with travel agencies and hotels to attract visitors.
- Work with business bodies to promote facility as a conference venue
- Market to other local facilities as a collaborative facility to take up overflow

7. Establishment, operations and management

7.1 Possible project timeline

A very high-level possible timeframe is shown below. This timeline can be initiated once the investor has been confirmed. The timeline outline does not take into account any complexities or delays that may arrive:

Phase	Timeline
Feasibility Study and Land acquisition	6 – 12 months
Funding acquisition	12 – 24 months
Architectural Design and Approvals	9 – 12 months
Construction and Infrastructure	18 – 24 months
Equipment Installation and Testing	6 – 9 months
Soft Launch & Marketing	3 months
Full Opening	54 – 84 months

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Several of the phases could be run in parallel and will be confirmed during the detailed project planning phase.

7.2 Organizational Structure

- Board of directors-responsible for overall facility at institutional level for financing and viability (chairman and non-exec)
- Operations executive – responsible for the operation of the entire facility.
- Artistic executive – Manages performances, exhibitions, and artist relations.
- Marketing and PR – responsible for branding and event promotions.
- Operations and Maintenance Staff – Ensures smooth daily operations including: cleaning; security; ticket sales etc.

The above executive and operations management could be part of a separate outsourced company with specialisation in this area.

Coffee shop, bar and restaurant under concessions, tendered for

7.3 Sustainability and community engagement

- Implement green building initiatives (solar energy, rainwater harvesting).
- Offer community programs to promote local talent.
- Partner with educational institutions for arts and music training.
- Partner with other local music, drama and arts bodies

8. Risk analysis and feasibility study

A proper feasibility study and risk assessment will be completed. A separate document will be compiled.

- Financial risks: Escalation in building costs may result in the facility becoming unaffordable. Failure to secure sufficient sustainable revenue streams will prevent investors from committing to the project.
- Market Risks: adapt programming based on audience demand and industry trends.
- Operational risks: Implement strong management and maintenance systems with good and regular oversight.

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9. Conclusion

The Music, Arts, and Conference Centre in George could be a transformative cultural hub that not only provides a home for the Carpe Musicam! orchestra and choir but could also support the wider arts and music community, drive tourism, and support local talent. By securing strategic funding and partnerships, this project would establish George and the Garden Route as a key destination for music; arts and business events in South Africa.

Next Steps:

- Conduct feasibility studies and finalize preferred location.
- Identify initial funding and investor commitments.
- Begin architectural design and construction planning.
- Develop marketing strategies and partnerships
- Finalise business plan

ADDENDUM A

Carpe Musicam! (www.carpemusicam.co.za) is an initiative to stimulate an interest in, and love for orchestral music in the Garden Route by providing enjoyable orchestral and choral music in the area. Part of its *raison d'être* is to create a safe, fun and educational environment for local musicians of all ages to develop and refine their art.

At present its main project is a community-based concert orchestra and choir who attract and retain all comers. Most adult members have “day” jobs or are retired and operate purely on a voluntary basis to perform at least 12 concerts per annum grouped into four differently themed series which are brought to three Garden Route centres viz, Sedgefield, George and Mossel Bay.

Currently the orchestra has a more-or-less constant nucleus of about forty players with an additional twenty school-age members who can be expected to come and go as educational needs dictate, but can generally be expected to return permanently at some later stage in their lives - thus furthering the sustainability of the organisation. Younger players are constantly being accepted in order begin their musical journey through the ranks.

Apart from the Concert Orchestra and Choir there is also the Pops Band which - although having a core of orchestral players - is a training ground for less experienced musicians of all ages and delivers an excellent product.

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Carpe Musicam! was first formed in July 2015 with an orchestra of 16 members, and is run by the musical and administrative partnership of two dedicated musicians, Elsabe Barkhuizen and Norman Carless.

Elsabe is a very experienced and sought after church organist and pianist, who has been playing professionally for more than fifty years. From 2011 until 2016 she held the post of Director of music for the Dutch Reformed Church's Mother Parish in George. Elsabe is also choir trainer for Carpe Musicam! and manages the Orchestra, Choir and Pops Band.

Norman has a long and successful career in South African military bands and orchestras, being a bandmaster for the South African Navy before his retirement in 2003. He is also a multi-instrumentalist performing regularly on the Trumpet, Cornet, Flute, Recorder and the French Horn. He is the secret (or not so secret) weapon of Carpe Musicam! as he specialises in custom orchestration of popular works for unusual grouping of instruments – each of the pieces presented by Carpe Musicam! has been specially arranged by Norman to take into account the instruments currently playing in the orchestra and the skill levels of each individual player.

It is strongly believed that a size and skill critical mass has been achieved and that after eleven years, it is time to look for a permanent home for these much-loved musical performance groups.



Concert Orchestra and Choir – Jul 2025

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Concert Orchestra – Jul 2025



Choir – Jul 2025

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Concert Orchestra and Choir – Dec 2025



Concert Orchestra and Choir – Apr 2026

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Pops Band - Dec 2025

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Pops Band – May 2026

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ADDENDUM B

The Hugo Lambrechts Music Centre is a Western Cape Education Department Music Centre that nurtures South Africa's musicians of tomorrow through specialised instrumental, vocal and theoretical tuition offered to school-going learners and adult students from our diverse communities.

In the 1980s, Mr Hugo Lambrechts, a former director of the Western Cape Education Department, raised the question as to why there are so few South African instrumentalists in our professional symphony orchestras. The answer, according to him, was that we did not have educational facilities where our children could start instrumental tuition at a young age. Mr Lambrechts wanted a music centre in the Parow area to serve the community of the northern suburbs. Although he was told that there was no money for such a centre, he persisted and used limited funds over a 3-year period and in 1986 established the Hugo Lambrechts Music Centre in the old Parow Primary School, at the corner of Picton and Alexandra Streets.

By 1989 all the remaining Parow Primary learners were transferred to Parow East Primary School and the Music Centre took over the entire premises.

The late Leon Hartshorne was appointed the first principal in 1986. His 3 heads of department were Louis van der Watt (Strings), Darryl Walters (Woodwinds) and Faan Malan (Brass). Their mission was to provide instrumental music tuition to school-going learners primarily in the northern suburbs of Cape Town.

Fulfilling Mr Lambrechts's dream, the development of the various bands and orchestras as well as the fast-progressing learners culminated in the formation of the Hugo Lambrechts Symphony Orchestra which had its debut performance, under the baton of Leon Hartshorne, at the five-year celebration of the Music Centre in 1991.

Another dream came true in 2002 when the [Hugo Lambrechts Auditorium](#) was completed. This world class concert performance venue, which seats 460 people and can handle an entire symphony orchestra and choir on its stage, has, since its completion, prompted performances by local and international artists on a yearly basis. It is also home to two of the largest music competitions in the country, the Hubert van der Spuy National Youth Music Competition (for primary school learners) and the National Youth Music Competition (for high school learners).

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