

Central has grand future in front of it

By ANNE SHERIDAN

THE Grand Central cinema on Bedford Row was demolished this week as part of the €100million redevelopment of the newly pedestrianised area.

However, Denis Leonard of Limerick Civic Trust has confirmed that the original Gothic facade of the Methodist church, located 15 feet behind the cinema, will be maintained when the new development goes ahead.

"Retail shops will be going in the basement and ground floor, while there will be offices on the second, third and fourth floor," a spokeswoman for O'Connor, Murphy and Gubbins Auctioneers told the Limerick Chronicle.

The refurbishment of the church, occupying a total space of 18,755 square feet, is expected to be completed by September and the original facade will be enclosed in a glass atrium, as these pictures reveal.

The building was designed by James Paine in the early 1800s, whose other notable architectural highlights in Limerick include Thomond Bridge.

Local historian Sean Curtin said the Grand Central was one



Demolition reveals the gothic facade of the former Methodist Church on Bedford Row

of the most popular cinemas in Limerick at its peak in the 1950s and 1960s. "It was one of the main cinemas at the time. If you couldn't get into the Savoy you'd go to the Grand Central. It was one of the first to have jumbo seats, where a couple would sit side by side. It was also one of the first cinemas to supply you with special 3D glasses. I'd say I saw every film there up to 1970," said Mr Curtin.

Volume six of Sean Curtin's A Stroll Down Memory Lane shows the Grand Central cinema advertising 1971 film The Last Valley, starring Omar Sharif and Michael Caine.

Originally built as Methodist church, the familiar facade to the theatre was a twentieth century addition. The much-loved cinema became known as "The Granna" in the 1950s and was later renamed the Central Studio in 1972.

The cinema hosted a number of important Irish premieres during its lifetime, including the Voice of Ireland in 1932.

Made in Mungret, the film was also Ireland's first speaking film.

Sir Peter Tait, three-times Mayor of Limerick and founder of the Limerick Clothing Factory, was married in the building.

At one stage twelve cinemas existed in the city centre. The Coliseum Cinema on O'Connell Street was built in the 1950s and now houses the Belltable Arts Centre. Up until recently the Belltable used the Grand Central for their film club

night.

Sexton Street once boasted The Ritz cinema, Glentworth Street had the Royal Cinema and the Royal Cinema existed on Cecil Street from 1939 to 1975. The Savoy Cinema first opened in 1935, with the film Brewsters Millions. It closed in 1974 and was demolished in 1988. Other notable cinemas included the Theatre Royal Cinema on Gerald Griffin Street, the Thomond Cinema on Nicholas Street and the Tivoli Cinema on Charlotte's Quay.

ANYBODY with an interest in the taxi business is invited to submit their views on future vehicle standards by March 15. They can do so online at commission@taxiregulator.ie or by post to; Response to Consultation Paper Number 4, Commission for Taxi Regulation, 35 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2.

Church Music LIMERICK Festival of Church Music takes place in the city from March 2 to 4 next and plays host to more than 44 choirs from all over the country. The festival, a celebration of choral singing and church music, opens on Friday March 2 at 8pm with guest choir Anuna giving the first concert in the Franciscan Church. This is only Anuna's second ever visit to Limerick, and will indeed be their only performance in Ireland this year.

Workshops AISLING O'Gorman, a graduate of the Irish World Academy's MA in Community Music, is running a series of workshops, entitled Singing for the Terrified, which will take place once every four weeks on Thursday evenings, March 1, March 29, April 26 and May 24 from 7 to 8.30pm at the Contemplative Centre at the University of Limerick. 10 per class. Gain confidence in a relaxed, fun atmosphere led by an inspiring singer and workshop leader. All songs taught by ear. All abilities welcome.

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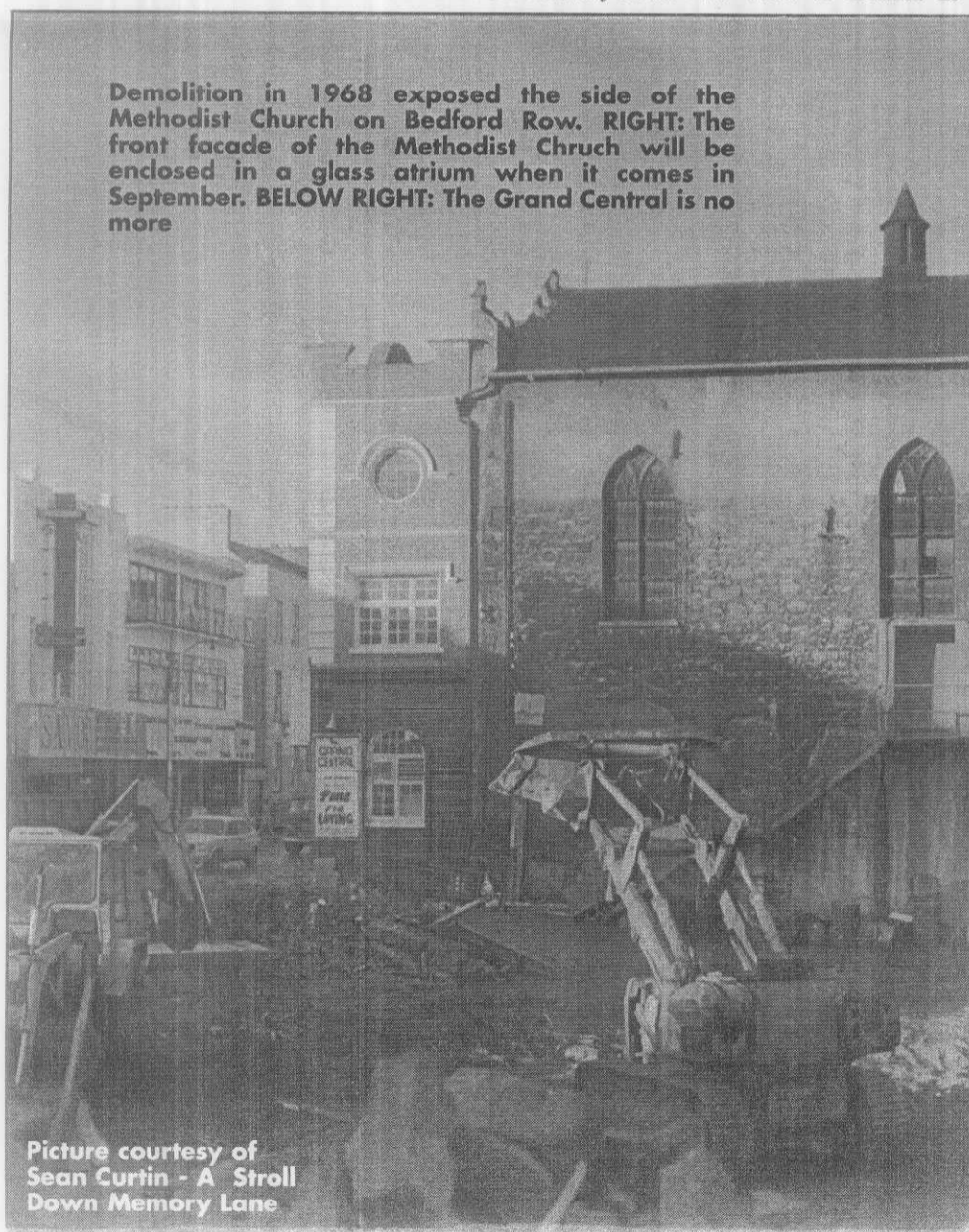
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Demolition in 1968 exposed the side of the Methodist Church on Bedford Row. RIGHT: The front facade of the Methodist Church will be enclosed in a glass atrium when it comes in September. BELOW RIGHT: The Grand Central is no more

Picture courtesy of Sean Curtin - A Stroll Down Memory Lane

