



## duke street theatre

"Suzie has guided us with care and ease, making this very steep learning curve one of enjoyment and worth. Her creativity and specialist contacts have allowed us to realise our vision for Duke Street Theatre despite the unbelievably short time scale. Without her and her brilliant team, we would have been forced to throw in our theatrical towel months ago." Sam Parker - Artistic Director

Client: Renegade Theatre Company  
 Value: Withheld  
 Completion: November 2014  
 Programme: 2½ months from initial appointment to opening night  
 Role: Architect

## a new pop up studio theatre

We collaborated with a dynamic, visionary young theatre company to help them deliver a 'found' theatre aimed at young performers and audiences. They provided their own funding; they built much of it themselves; and they secured donations of recycled materials from local and national organisations. In tandem they also produced their first show, ready for the opening night - all within 2½ months!



Renegade's cast, aged 15 to 20

## design approach

It was clear from the start we would need to find new ways of working - with design, construction and approvals running in tandem.



Donated floor & seating of the new theatre space

We played a central role bringing together a team with the right experience to help make things happen fast. The project involved 'change of planning use' and 'change of use' for building regulations. Defining the building as a pop-up unheated venue simplified construction, and will reduce long term energy bills. We prepared coherent fire and safety strategies to meet the complex requirements for fire escape, and to keep the build costs and programme to a minimum.

The warehouse provided an industrial blank canvas and our design strategy split the space into two main areas:

- back stage and crossover – with dressing units created from storage palettes, and a protected escape route to the outside.
- performance space and foyer – a fixed cafe / bar servery, toilets and store, with flexible seating. The performance area can be separated from the foyer space using large theatrical drapes.



Visual showing thrust stage format

The theatre has been fashioned using as much as 80% donated, reclaimed or recycled materials and fittings. Demountable rostra and stage flooring donated by Oxford Playhouse, together with seats provided by the local town hall, created the initial thrust stage layout - many other formats are possible. The foyer bar was built using a combination of donated storage palettes, timber cladding recycled from Pinewood Studios, and reclaimed industrial lights. They bring warmth and a sense of drama to the foyer.



Phase 2 - a new exterior reflecting the youth and vitality of the company

The design aim for the interior was to create a youthful energetic atmosphere that will encourage the local community to get involved and use the space. Future plans include a more extensive upgrade to the external appearance and setting of the building, and investigating further expansion into the adjoining property.