

## The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

### “Courses”

### The Green Cabaret

#### Section 1 About the project

##### Summary

In Autumn 2012 Central piloted a sustainable approach to theatre production, using a musical theatre project, which is a core part of the curriculum for third year BA Acting and BA Theatre Production students. The pilot, a production of ‘Cabaret’ (March 2013), allowed Central to identify key sustainability strategies and focus areas, as well as providing students with an invaluable learning tool. The legacy of the production was to forge a foundation for effective integration of sustainability into the curriculum and thereby across future student productions; an example of the latter being a recent production of ‘Arabian Nights,’ at the world famous Minack Theatre.

##### Project partners

A key associate was ‘Julie’s Bicycle’ ([www.juliesbicycle.com](http://www.juliesbicycle.com)), a not for profit organisation, whose work seeks to make sustainability intrinsic to the business, art and ethics of the creative industries. In particular, Julie’s Bicycle engaged students at the outset, by running a workshop on sustainable production and inspiring them to be creative and propose their own solutions to environmental challenges within the production.

#### Section 2 The results

##### The problem

Theatres/performing arts spaces have traditionally looked to tackle their environmental impact by focusing on large organisational/estates’ issues, such as utility consumption or procurement strategy. The aforementioned, although key to measuring and managing an institution’s carbon footprint, are also inherently self-limiting as tools with wider applications. Often perceived as dull and uninspiring, they can too often end up as mere applications of policy and economics as opposed to becoming the drivers of more aspirational, environmental goals, which seek to change mindsets, cultures and even an industry.

##### The approach

Central has taken the approach that to enable sustainable practices to flourish in our community, as well as our immediate estate, our students need to fully understand, appreciate and embed environmental practices throughout their work and time with us. It is from our prestigious institution that they will embark on careers in a highly influential theatrical community; it is their mindsets that will contribute to carving out the future traditions within our creative industry. The belief is that if we can nurture our students and future theatrical practitioners, in both the art and creativity of sustainability, the work that will then radiate from such an approach will, in gradual shifts, see the industry not only become greener but more inspirational, influential

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##### Profile

Example:

- HEI
- 1008 students, 933.8 FTE
- 160 staff, 135 FTE and 612 visiting lecturers
- Urban

# Winner's case study

and innovative in its environmental dynamic. Therefore, in essence, the approach taken at the start of Central's environmental journey was: "what does the building/institution exist for and how can its core concern lead the entire establishment, both our estate and industry as a whole, forward in becoming more inherently sustainable?"

## Our goals

It is by seeking to embed environmental thinking/practice into every aspect of theatre production, as a theatre specialist, that Central wishes to grow green practice throughout its whole being and thereby act as a beacon for all within the performing arts sector.

## Obstacles and solutions

| Examples: Obstacles          | Solutions   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Traditional set design       | Design of show undertaken with a minimal "make do and mend" vintage aesthetic             |
| PVC tape for technical setup | Substitution of re-usable 'velcro ties' for binding cables to bars for lighting and sound |
| Standard batteries for power | Substitution of rechargeable batteries for all show production radio microphone packs     |
| Paper scripts                | Digital scripting and printing to A5 script   |

## Performance and results

Central has allowed theatre to take the front seat in driving the environmental momentum of the institution instead of allowing the latter to impose its overarching will and hence possibly stifling its creative community. For further details and analysis please view the Julie's Bicycle project case study at:

<http://www.juliesbicycle.com/resources/case-studies/production/cssd-cabaret>.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

Academic staff are high ranking professionals, active in their discipline, with often global reputations, they are being encouraged, via hosted sessions/workshops (in collaboration with Julie's Bicycle), to carry forward the spirit of The Green Cabaret into their professional communities, as part of their personal contribution to achieving Central's overarching environmental ethos. Future productions will be developed and marketed to a sustainable production policy developed as a direct result of the project.

### Sharing your project

A case study of The Green Cabaret is available on the Julie's Bicycle website (see above for details).

### What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

As a small, specialist, performing arts institution, recognition from outside our niche profession, for an award that recognises how creativity and sustainability can complement one another, has further inspired and energised the continued nurturing of sustainable practices within our theatrical community.

### Further information

Please contact Susanne Page (Susanne.page@cssd.ac.uk), Environmental Manager, for any additional information/queries regarding this project.