

The Greenhouse – Artistic Direction 2020



THE GREENHOUSE BY BOXED IN THEATRE

"Keep an eye on this young company. They're the future. Happening now." – The Zero Wastrels, Ed Fringe 2019.

Intro

I realised that we've been quite bogged down in logistics and mission statements recently, which means I haven't taken the opportunity to express the artistic vision for the project. Hopefully, this will be useful in some way!

"The Greenhouse is an exciting, innovative idea that harnesses the immediacy of performance to create intimacy, as well as deep and meaningful connections with audiences. It experiments with the use of space, minimalism, and waste to both spark discussion on climate change and inspire people to action."

Exciting and innovative

The Greenhouse demands innovation because of its approach and its subject matter. By making work that is zero-waste, we are moving away from many of the trappings of modern theatre – elaborate spectacles that fill huge auditoriums and are, at the end of the day, a symptom of our obsession with consumption. The Greenhouse shuns this, instead suggesting a kinder way of making theatre. Rather than pushing against this and trying to find ways to bring in elements of modern theatre, I am interested in shows that embrace and experiment with this to create theatre in a style that is new, exciting, and unique.

Don't say: We only need two or three spotlights, can't we buy a lighting board, it's an asset anyway.

Do say: We're exploring ways of harnessing and focusing natural light to create a sort of natural spotlight.

Immediacy, Intimacy and Connection

The immediacy of theatre and performance is undoubtedly its most powerful tool – the idea that there is someone, standing in front of you, actually talking to you. In many ways, modern theatre works hard to remove this. Spectacles create a barrier between audiences and actors that clearly separate the heightened world of the stage from the real world of the auditorium. Similarly, performance styles that focus on ‘creating characters’ make actors no longer real people, which can make it harder for audiences to actually connect with them. This is a shame. The Greenhouse moves in the opposite direction – it celebrates the immediacy and the personal in performance. By creating a deeply intimate space, we invite audiences to join us in the world of the show, for a short time. This, in turn, allows them to build meaningful connections with the performers, and the show as a whole, which is a key tool in sparking discussion and inspiring action on the climate crisis.

Don't say: I think the audience might be a bit too close.

Do say: How can we include the audience in the narrative and themes of the show?

Use of Space

BoxedIn Theatre was founded on the principal that space is an underutilised element in the performing arts. Interestingly enough, of the multiple projects that we've worked on, we've never performed in a theatre. Instead, we've done everything from a huge tent to a medical laboratory, all to explore how the space a show is performed in effects the way people connect to that show. This evolved into a simple theory – audiences have an emotional response to any space they enter. That response can be harnessed to strengthen the message of a show. The Greenhouse continues this tradition, specifically asking how we can create a space and use it in such a way that it connects audiences to the natural environment. Shows should play with space both in design and in direction as a tool to further encourage audience members to consider their relationship with the environment.

Don't say: We could do this show anywhere.

Do say: The themes of The Greenhouse as a space connect really well with the themes of the show!

Minimalism and Waste

Of course, a central tenant of the project is waste. From a thematic perspective, we're exploring how damaging our mindset on waste is both to the natural environment and to us as a society. We want to demonstrate that we don't need to generate all that much waste – or any waste at all really – to make top-quality theatre. In fact, a focus on resource heavy work and elaborate spectacles can stifle creativity, leading to work that may be entertaining, but that is far less engaging and intimate. From an aesthetic perspective, we're looking for shows that embrace the idea of reducing waste. We're asking for a mindset change here – rather than celebrating huge, elaborate, single use sets, we want shows that are inventive in their resources, celebrating a lack of waste through minimalism and creativity. These shows demonstrate that great and beautiful work isn't dependent on purchasing lots of resources.

Don't say: I wish we could have a bigger set...

Do say: How many different ways can we use this prop?

Sparking discussion and inspiring action

All of this boils down to one key thing. We believe that theatre is a tool for creating positive change in the world. Making shows that are innovative and intimate, making interesting use of space while embracing the idea of reducing waste, is all done to help make our shows more inspiring. To help our shows connect audiences with the idea that we need to protect the natural environment. To encourage discussion around sustainability, and prompt audiences into taking action in relation to the climate crisis. All in all, we want shows that embrace this fundamental idea – shows that believe in the power of theatre to change hearts and minds, and that set out to harness that power in the face of the climate crisis.

Don't say: It's just a show, what can we do?

Do say: What do want audiences to think about when they leave?