Figure 11. Stage door of the Pretoria State Theatre's Opera stage (Author, 2010).
06. PRECEDENT STUDIES
# 6.1 TEMPORARY THEATRES

## 6.1.1 Pop-Up Theatre

**Hessisches Staatstheater**  
Darmstadt, Germany  
Convertible City  
2005

While the original theatre designed in 1972 by Rudolf Prange was being reconstructed, the parking lot beneath it was used as a temporary performing space. The new structure was inserted where the driveway divides into multiple lanes in front of the entrance of the parking lot. The space accommodates all of the functions needed to run a studio theatre and includes a canteen, storage rooms and access to the new two-storey high foyer of the main building above.

“Very interesting is the renewed atmosphere that is created by the temporary transformation. Both friendly and inspiring.” (De Boer, 2009).

## 6.1.2 Puppet Theatre

**Carpenter Centre for the Visual Arts**  
Harvard University, Massachusetts  
Pierre Huyghe & Michael Meredith  
2004

The only major Le Corbusier-designed building in North America is The Carpenter Centre for the Visual Arts at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A temporary puppet theatre was constructed within its sunken courtyard in celebration of its 40th anniversary. With the help of computer technology and students, conceptual artist Pierre Huyghe and Harvard assistant professor of architecture, Michael Meredith, collaborated on the structure. 2,000 bolts were used to form a rigid frame that held together 500 white polycarbonate panels covered in real moss. “Metaphorical identities included an egg, a seed, a tumour, an alien spacecraft, and Le Corbusier’s brain.” (Bellostes, 2008).

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This precedent illustrates how a temporary insertion can be used to celebrate a permanent building.

Figure 112. Exterior view of the Pop-Up Theatre (De Boer, 2009).

Figure 113. Interior view of the Puppet Theatre (Bellostes, 2008).
6.1.3 Almeida at Gainsborough Studios
The Almeida Theatre
Shoreditch, London
Haworth Tompkins
2000

Materials:
- Turf
- Painted steel
- Reclaimed timber
- Painted scaffold tube
- Recycled theatre seats

Value: £750,000

During renovations The Almeida employed a series of temporary venues and staged once-off shows to maintain its presence. The coal-fired power station, a huge 19th century industrial structure that was used to support the Metropolitan railway, was converted into film studios in 1919. By 1999 partial demolition and conversion to apartments were scheduled for the now derelict building.

At the time, The Almeida Theatre was looking for a temporary venue for the staging of Richard II and Coriolanus; two large-scale productions. The theatre negotiated a one-year-lease from the developer and Haworth Tompkins did the conversions for as low-cost as possible.

The original volume, of over 25m high, was restored by demolishing an intermediate floor (Figure 114).

The remainder of the building was treated as ‘found’ material and contained the foyers and bars. Original openings were retained for scenic effect. Scaffold staircases, ramps and simple cut openings were inserted to comply with the complex fire escape and circulation requirements for an audience of 900.

A simple scaffold seating system created a large courtyard auditorium on three levels (Figure 116) and basic soundproofing was installed. After playing to full houses throughout the summer of 2000, the venue closed at the end of the season and has now been demolished, as planned (Tompkins, 2010).

Figure 114. Adaptation of Gainsborough studios (Tompkins, 2010).

Figure 115. Interior views of The Almeida Theatre (Tompkins, 2010).

Figure 116. Section through The Almeida Theatre. (Tompkins, 2010).

This precedent demonstrates how an old building can be temporarily adapted into a theatre that complies with safety requirements.
6.1.4 Ten-day Theatre

Institute for Contemporary Arts (PICA)
TBA (time based art) festival, Portland, Oregon
BOORA Architects
2004

Materials:
• Pegboard
• Scaffold structure
• Visqueen
• Plastic buckets
• MDF board
• Recycled carpet tiles

Value: $10 000

Eight volunteer architects turned a vacant warehouse into a ten-day temporary theatre for the TBA (Time Based Art) festival (Figure 123), Portland Institute of Contemporary Art’s annual 10-day international arts festival (Figure 119). The budget was small and materials had to be undamaged and re-usable afterwards.

“It’s always fun when a team of architects gets the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and engage in making something directly, not having products be confined to paper and scale models.” (Architecture Week, 2005)

The structural grid of the building informed the diagram of the theatre (Figure 117). One of the structural bays provided sufficient clear space for the stage. Around this stage, seating was positioned in the bays of the grid (Figure 124). Existing offices lining one wall were used as back-of-house support spaces. The positionning of the theatre in the warehouse reserved a large area of remaining space for the cabaret, bar and café (Figure 121).

A scaffold “media wall” differentiates the theatre volume from the surrounding volume of the warehouse. It partially bisects the warehouse, creating the envelope that encloses the theatre. The media wall’s interior and exterior are clad in pegboard and visqueen and illuminated from within, creating a glowing volume of light contained within a gritty industrial shell (Figure 118).

Pegboard, suspended from a swinging crane, creates a hanging entry marquee. A portal in the media wall with a projecting canopy forms the entrance. Technical equipment, transformers and cabling are concealed within the media wall. An elevated control room serves both the theatre and the cabaret stage. Benches, on a raked scaffold substructure was assembled from five gallon plastic buckets, MDF board and recycled carpet tiles (Figure 120 & 122) (Arquitectura de Interiores, 2008).

Figure 117. Internal illumination contrasting the gritty industrial shell (Arquitectura de Interiores, 2008).

Figure 118. The found space before and after. No sign of the theatre’s presence remained (Arquitectura de Interiores, 2008).

This precedent illustrates how a vacant space can be temporarily activated to create a performance venue during a festival and then be returned completely to its former state leaving only the memory behind.

Figure 119. Eight volunteers assembling the media wall (Arquitectura de Interiores, 2008).
Figure 120. Four steel columns of the industrial warehouse framed the temporary stage (Arquitectura de Interiores, 2008).

Figure 121. The visqueen cladding of the "media wall" reveals the skeletal scaffold structure (Arquitectura de Interiores, 2008).

Figure 122. Layout of the theatre and the media wall construction (Arquitectura de Interiores, 2008).

Figure 123. TBA (Time Based Art) festival poster

Figure 124. Plastic buckets, medium-density fiberboard and borrowed carpet tiles create bench seating with a raked backrest (Arquitectura de Interiores, 2008)
6.2 TYPICAL THEATRES

6.2.1 Lier Theatre - UP Campus

Description
Simple orange face-brick building, corrugated steel roof and exposed wooden trusses 3.5m above the finished floor level. Medium sized, black box theatre for intimate productions.

Exterior & entrance
Trees, planters and concrete benches along pathways separate the building from the parking area and create an outdoor waiting area.

Foyer
Service counter, sink, bar fringe, freezer, kettle and cupboards. Ablution facilities; one male and one female wc. A black pin-up board. Recessed, ceiling down lighters.

Seating capacity 80
Audience
Entrance from the side. One door between the stage and the raked seating. Stackable upholstered chairs staggered on 6 levels of rostra.

Stage
Proscenium stage on ground level, 8.4m wide and 7m deep play area. The stage is on ground level.

Backstage
A long narrow rehearsal space called ‘The Bok’; perpendicularly attached to the main theatre building with backstage access to the dressing room. One dressing room with lit mirrors and worktops divided into two areas by a curtain. Separate male and female ablution facilities with one wc, wash hand-basin and shower each. Backstage access to the stage via a passage, lit with blue lights that won’t spill onto the stage.

Technical aspects
A 3x1.5m control box on the highest rostra behind the audience is used to operate the sound system, lighting and special effects. The control desk houses the necessary electronic equipment; a computer to programme lighting sequences, a CD player and communication devices. Luminaries for effect and functional lighting are hung from the exposed wooden roof trusses.
6.2.2 Masker Theatre - UP Campus

Description
Converted from an old school hall, the Masker dates back to the 1970’s. The building consists of a concrete frame with orange-brick infill and a corrugated steel, pitched roof with a three-storey high apex. Steel-framed windows were painted black to create the necessary level of darkness inside.

Exterior & entrance
Brick paving, walkways, some trees, planters and concrete seating, separate the entrance from the parking and create a gathering space. Although notice boards are placed along the walkways, posters are stuck onto the theatre door and front facade (Figure 133).

Foyer
Separated from the theatre auditorium by a purple velvet curtain which also functions as an acoustic absorber behind the audience. A simple service counter is located close to the entrance door. Ablution facilities can be accessed from the foyer (Figure 131).

Seating capacity: 117

Audience
Loose chairs are placed on a series of raked rostra that can be altered to allow different seating arrangements. Additional seating is provided on a mezzanine level above the foyer.

Stage
A typical 9m x 7m wooden school hall proscenium stage raised 800mm above the ground floor level. Dark fabric curtain wings.

Backstage
Four change rooms with lit dressing tables; wc’s, basins and showers located behind the stage with backstage access to the stage.

Technical aspects
6m above the ground level are six parallel rigs onto which luminaries are fixed. The control desk is situated towards the front on the mezzanine level.
6.3 ADAPTIVE RE USE THEATRE

6.3.1 Market Theatre - Johannesburg

Description
In 1976 Johannesburg’s Indian Fruit Market was converted into the Market Theatre; internationally renowned as South Africa’s “Theatre of the Struggle”. In a post-apartheid South Africa the theatre aims to encourage new dramatic writing. The complex spans 36 meters and the roof of this vast Edwardian market hall is 200m in length. Metal trusses and other components were manufactured in Glasgow in 1922, shipped to South Africa and assembled here.

Exterior & entrance
The main entrance to the Market Theatre complex is the grand Edwardian facade in Wolhuter Street, which has three arched windows, flanked by twin domed towers (Figure 135).

Rental
The theatre and other spaces are available for rent and can be used for exhibitions, conferences and launches.

Foyer
The entrance hallway is defined by a series of arches and concrete columns, a row of pendant luminaries and banners (Figure 136 & 137). The ticket office is situated to the right of the entrance. Niche-like rooms branch out of the hallway creating seating and gathering spaces. A flight of stairs leads up to a second foyer with a small bar.

Audience
The temporary, ad-hoc character, usually restricted to the stage, is brought into the auditorium space through the nature of the conversion. Existing services are exposed; brick walls are left bare and some of the vendors’ signs still hang from the gallery. Loose rows of upholstered auditorium chairs or benches are packed onto raked rostra.

Stage
The Market Theatre consists of three theatres; the Main Theatre, the Barney Simon Theatre and the Laager Theatre. All three are open stages with seating on three sides. The stage floor of the Laager Theatre is on the ground level; the stage of the Barney Simon Theatre is raised one step and the circular stage of the Main Theatre is raised about 900mm from the ground level (see next page).

Technical aspects
Control desks and technical equipment were handled in a makeshift fashion and traditional theatre conventions adapted to overcome the limitations presented by the existing spaces. For example, the placement of the control desk to the side in the Laager Theatre (see next page).
**Laager Theatre**

Seating capacity: 100-120
Rental: R8 500 (+ 5% of door income)

**Barney Simon Theatre**

Seating capacity: 100-120
Rental: R8 500 (+ 5% of door income)

- Laager Theatre:

**Main Theatre**

Seating capacity: 387
Rental per week: R25 000 (+ 5% of door income)