

Rebecca's Studio "Canada's Smallest Theatre" Design Notes

"Canada's Smallest Theatre" is located in a studio in the Artscape Wychwood Barns, Toronto, Canada. This converted hall of an old streetcar depot is used for the sale of organic agriculture, a children's theater space, exhibition spaces and live/work studios for professional artists.

There are 16 large and 10 small uniform live/work studios. "Canada's Smallest Theatre" is one of these small studios, designed for the performing arts. It creates a living and working space, and a theater workshop for actors.

The room is at ground level from the street, and accessible through a small 8' x 4' ft front garden. Next to the entrance door is the only window, approx 8'-2" in. x 6'-6" in. large. Inside 4 steps lead down from the entrance, about 2'-7" in. down. The space has a total depth of 24'-11" in. The front half of the room has a ceiling height of 9'-10" in and width of 13'-1" in. The back half has a height of 8'-8" in and width of approximately 11'-1" in. Basically one has to imagine a larger and a slightly smaller cube, that have been placed side by side. In the middle of the room there is a step at the ceiling. In the back left wall two doors lead into the Kitchen and Bathroom, the doors are 2'-6" in. wide and 6'-6" in. height.

In order to transform the room into a theater workshop and still respect its use as accommodation, 4 wood structures were created:

1. Seating Area/Window Wall
2. Side Stage / wall closet with folding bed,
3. A portal with curtains / room divider for private bedroom and
4. A stage platform with a revolving plate.

1. Seating Area/Window Wall: In front of the window to the left of the entrance door, stands a 2'-11" in. high, 2'-11" in. deep and 9'-2" in. wide platform. This creates an 8.2 square foot area in front of the window at street level. This gives the semi-basement room a conservatory-like window view with plenty of daylight.

This platform includes a system of large drawers and folding platforms that can be configured as a seating area with 3 levels, each 2-9" in. deep and 1'-5" in. in height. The levels can be equipped with chairs or seat cushions. The result is seating for 15 to 20 spectators or other players. The folding platforms can be assembled in the space in various configurations thus either allowing different viewing relationships between "stage" and "audience", or blurring this separation all together.

2. Side Stage / Closet: Approximately 13'-1" in. deep, 8'-8" in. high and 2'-3" in. wide the cabinet fills the rear right side of the room. Structurally the piece accomplishes an overall symmetry in the room. The 2'-3" in. x 8'-8" in. front end meets the existing offset characteristic of the ceiling and converts the left side of the room into a theatrical portal. It creates a square stage, 8'-6" in. in length and width. The rear third of the cabinet fits a folding bed 4'-7" in. wide. The rest of the structure contains various shelves, drawers and a wardrobe behind high sliding doors. Two 1'-3" in. wide and 8'-6" in. high cabinet sections are equipped with floodlights, a classical "wing wall" position, which allows for sidelights. The opposing doors for the kitchen and bathroom offer corresponding lighting wing lane options from the left side of the room.

3. Portal / Private Space: the proportions of the ensuing proscenium arch will be easily formed by the frame of construction. The portal stands about a 6 in distance from the wall/ceiling step, incorporating the front end of the cabinet. In this in-between space is a large moving curtain that can disappear behind the two open "portal ends". Besides acting as a curtain, it creates a division for the room and enables a "closed" state, a hidden private space.

4. Stage: The stage is a 8'-2" in. x 8'-2" in., 10in. high, mobile riser. Inset is an electrically driven revolving plate with a diameter of 7'-6" in. The revolve motor is located inside the riser.

The room has a professional and variable light and audio system.

The basic color of walls and the structures is light gray to allow for optimal projection capabilities.

All the walls are outfitted with wooden strips to create track positions for the hanging of materials so that the space can change as quickly and fundamentally as possible.

-Hendrik Scheel, Designer