

Arcola Theatre goes hydrogen powered

UK - London's Arcola Theatre, one of the UK's leading independent venues, has installed a hydrogen fuel cell to power its café/bar and selected main house shows. The fuel cell operates almost silently, producing nothing but electricity and clean water.

The 5kW fuel cell system takes pride of place in the foyer of the theatre accompanied by displays describing the benefits and challenges posed by this ground breaking technology. The prominent location of the fuel cell and the challenge of relying entirely upon it provide both a powerful educational tool and a source of motivation for reducing energy use.

The first show to be powered by the fuel cell, Simple8's *The Living Unknown Soldier*, produced by Strawberry Vale, may well be London's premier ecologically sustainable show - the environmental impact of all aspects of the production have been minimised, including set construction, marketing, company travel and show lighting. The production's environmental footprint will be evaluated by leading sustainability advisers Global Action Plan and the lessons learned published for the benefit of other practitioners.

The lighting for the show has a peak power consumption of 4.5kW, up to 60% less than comparable lighting installations. This is made possible through extensive use of LED lighting, provided by lighting supplier White Light, and careful use of high efficiency tungsten lamps provided by ETC.

In addition, Arcola's bar/café has been upgraded to an eco-bar serving organic and fair-trade refreshments, illuminated by a low energy LED lighting system supplied by PixelRange. The lighting for the entire café/bar now consumes under 500W, a saving of 60%, with the added benefit of providing near infinite flexibility in light level and colour for perfect daytime operation as well as for café/bar performances.

The IdaTech ElectraGen fuel cell system has been supplied by London Hydrogen Partnership with additional funding from the UK Department for Culture Media & Sport, Arts Council England, the London Borough of Hackney and the Mayor of London's Greening London Theatre initiative. Hydrogen for the fuel cell has been supplied by BOC gases.

This project is part of Arcola Theatre's extensive sustainability-related activities - under the banner of Arcola Energy, spearheaded by Dr Ben Todd, the theatre's executive director, who also works as a consultant in the fuel cell industry. He said: "The arts have a crucial role to play in elucidating and motivating the changes in lifestyle necessary to deliver an equitable future for all humankind. Through Arcola Energy, Arcola Theatre is demonstrating that bold changes can be made and that making them offers exciting opportunities for new creative partnerships."

(Jim Evans)

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