

Shop Front Theatre

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Unique and truly magical

I performed at the Shop Front in Steve Waters' three-hander *Far From The Sea*. I remember lovely summer morning walks in to the City Arcade from my digs (and very easy parking on the roof when it was raining), the enormous IKEA looming over our rehearsals, falafel from the street vendors for lunch, and feeling so at home in the ex-fish and chip shop, as we watched both our prospective audience and our very subject matter walk past the windows every few moments.

Given how entwined the creative team of Chris, Julia and Steve were in the subject matter, and how much 38 City Arcade perfectly suited the questions posed by the play: 'how do you create a city?' and 'surely by asking the people who live there?' it was a true privilege to be involved. To this day that job is one of the few I've had which felt truly vital, truly courageous, playing with ideas, and engaging with its audience right at the very heart of the community it portrayed in the most direct ways possible.

I am immensely proud of that gig, and am aware how lucky I was to perform at the Shop Front Theatre. We took the play on tour, and the other venues served to remind us all just how unique and truly magical the Shop Front Theatre is.

I feel confident that Shop Front Theatre's atmosphere, its authenticity, its uniqueness, its truth and its magic will stay in Theatre Absolute's hearts, and in the hearts of all those who have ever been in Shop Front Theatre with them.

And from their hearts will spring new ideas, images and sounds to keep the conversation moving forward. Nothing is forever, but what the Shop Front Theatre stood for will always be necessary, always be challenging, always be what makes human beings human.

Richard Earl