



Bernadette and other Teenage Folk Tales

Theatre Green Book case study - April 2025

Introduction

Restoke puts the people of Stoke-on-Trent at the heart of creative adventures. We make performances, plan events and run workshops alongside people who may not usually meet, forming new bonds of friendship, understanding and solidarity in the city. You can find out more about Restoke at www.restoke.org.uk

Theatre Green Book is a sector-led initiative to make theatre* more environmentally sustainable and promotes the idea of a circular economy (reusing and recycling resources rather than buying new). You can find out more about Theatre Green Book at www.theatregreenbook.com

Bernadette and other Teenage Folk Tales was a Restoke production, devised and co-created with 13 teenagers and a team of professional creatives. Rehearsals and performances took place at Restoke's venue The Ballroom, a non-theatre space in Stoke-on-Trent, between January and March 2025. Bernadette was the first production on which Restoke worked with the Theatre Green Book framework. We set ourselves the goal of achieving Basic level, which we achieved. This case study sets out what was achieved and some of our key learnings from working with Theatre Green Book for the first time.

*Restoke is a cross art-form organisation producing live performances which contain movement, music and story.

Basic level targets

To achieve Theatre Green Book Basic level a production must meet the following targets:

Of the items used on a production...

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 50% have had a previous use (reused or recycled) | 50% are newly purchased |
|--|-------------------------|

After a production...

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 65% of items used will have a future use | 35% will be thrown away |
|--|-------------------------|

On Bernadette and other Teenage Folk Tales we achieved:

Of the items used on the production...

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| 79% had a previous use (reused or recycled) | 21% newly purchased |
|---|---------------------|

After a production...

| |
|---|
| 100% of items used will have a future use |
|---|

A detailed breakdown of data can be found on our Theatre Green Book calculator for this production:

[x Restoke - Bernadette TGB calculator - Apr 25.xlsx](#)

Key learnings

Use the Theatre Green Book calculator throughout the design process

Although we referred to the Theatre Green Book framework throughout the design process, from written clauses in team members' contracts to agenda items in design and production meetings, we didn't use the [Theatre Green Book calculator](#) until we were reviewing our work after the shows. In hindsight this was an error. Inputting items into the calculator makes the impact of each design decision immediately visible. Had we used the calculator during the design process it may have prompted us to look for more sustainable options for several items, e.g. using salvaged rather than new ply for our forest sub-floor. The calculator is a really useful tool and we'll refer to it throughout the design process on future projects.

Use secondhand clothing websites to save time and money

Secondhand websites such as [Messina Hembry](#) were used to purchase most of the costume items for this show. Designer April Dalton reported that purchasing from these websites took no more time than purchasing new items from 'high street' websites and actually saved time compared to searching through charity shops for items. Items arrived in bulk deliveries using minimal packaging and returns were also done in bulk, again saving time and packaging. Prices paid were consistently lower than buying new. This sustainable, efficient and cost effective way of sourcing costumes will form part of our and April's ongoing practice.

Embrace creative and flexible thinking

Working collaboratively as a team we found some creative solutions to making this production more sustainable, for example using the many flight cases the hired lighting arrived in as audience seating. This idea

not only reduced the need for us to buy new seating it also provided a solution for where to store the flight cases whilst the Ballroom was being used as a performance space. Flexibility on the part of the artistic director and designer also helped us to work sustainably and by agreeing to use our existing, perhaps not quite perfect, Ballroom chairs for further audience seating massively reduced our need for purchasing new seating.



Photograph by Jenny Harper

And some thoughts...

Investing in makers

Many of the set items used in this production were hired in, mostly from independent local or regional suppliers. Supporting these organisations felt like a positive choice, environmentally, economically and ethically. Hiring costumes felt different though. For this production we needed a bear costume. We researched hiring an existing costume from a theatre store but found the cost to be the same, if not slightly more, than the cost of commissioning a freelance artist to make a new costume for us. Also, it would have needed considerable modifications to fit our 5ft teenage performer. Although commissioning an artist meant using new materials (and we tried to do this as sustainably as possible, e.g. using deadstock material) investing in a freelance artist and their skills as a maker felt like the right decision on this occasion and made us consider the impact of the sector's increased hiring and reusing of costumes on freelance artists, makers and designers.

Travel

We worked hard to minimize travel miles on this production by combining deliveries or using local suppliers. Over half of the freelancers we employed lived within 25 miles of the Ballroom. And yet we still clocked up 12,000 miles of travel, most of it car travel. Partly, this amount of car travel was due to poor public transport infrastructure, an issue outside of our boundaries of control. But our rehearsal schedule, an issue within our control, was another reason why so many miles were travelled by the team. For this production we rehearsed once a week over a period of three months as this was the most convenient schedule for the company of teenagers we were co-creating with due to their schooling commitments. But this schedule resulted in many repeat journeys for the team and increased our travel emissions significantly. Balancing the needs of non-professional performers with our desire to employ exceptional freelance artists whilst also working sustainably is complex and nuanced and something we will continue to explore.

For more information about this case study, Restoke's work or to hire a bear costume for a 5ft performer please contact: info@restoke.org.uk



Photograph by Jenny Harper