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Free Theatre books gym time

Abbie Napier · 05:00, Sep 16 2014

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STACY SOUIRES/ FAIRFAX NZ

THEME NIGHTS: Ubu Nights are taking place every Friday night at the Arts Centre in Christchurch - live performances and guests can enjoy drinks and plates of food.

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When George Parker heard The Gymnasium at the Arts Centre was up for grabs, he knew Free Theatre could make it special.

The space was originally pitched as a hospitality venue but the professional theatre company now has two years in the area to prove itself.

First on the performance schedule is Ubu Nights.

Parker and the Free Theatre team have set up The Gym as a combination performance venue.

There is professional lighting, set against a backdrop of exposed brick where all the strengthening is visible. The gym floor is still there with markers for basketball and holes in the door from archery practice.

The venue is raw and unique.

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For Ubu Nights there is no stage, as such. There are tables made from cable reels and old wooden chairs. There is a bar and a food truck parked outside and the audience comes and goes as it pleases.

Ubu Nights are a way of bringing together many elements and performers. Each night has a theme, with food and performance to match.

Last week, Ubu was all about tango and Argentinian cuisine. This week, it is all about David Lynch film and music, with a menu to match.

There will be six Ubu Nights in total before a production is staged before Christmas. In the next two years, the space will host a wide range of alternative performances.

"Of course, it's all on the smell of an oily rag," Parker says.

Free Theatre at The Gym has access to some funding to make its vision work.

"There'll be a hell of a battle with old Christchurch saying we can't do this or that but it's a battle worth having," Parker says.

While Ubu Nights are free entry, Parker says the "free" in Free Theatre is more about a theatre free to stage whatever performance it wants.

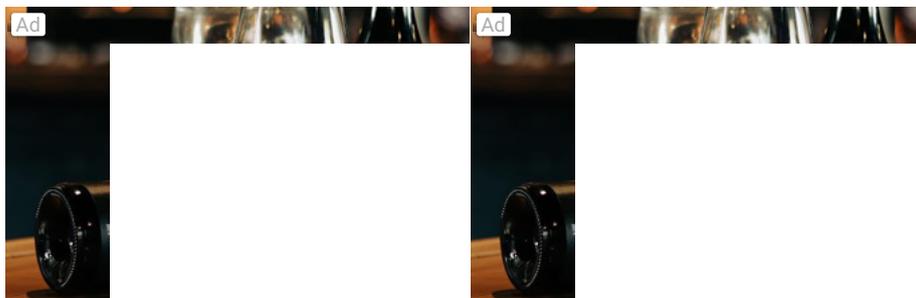
Ubu Nights are on Fridays. The bar is stocked with Black Estate wine and Cassels and Sons beer. Eftpos is available.

Doors open around 6pm but visitors can come and go as they please.

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For weekly info on the Ubu Nights theme and menu, see the Free Theatre Christchurch Facebook page.

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