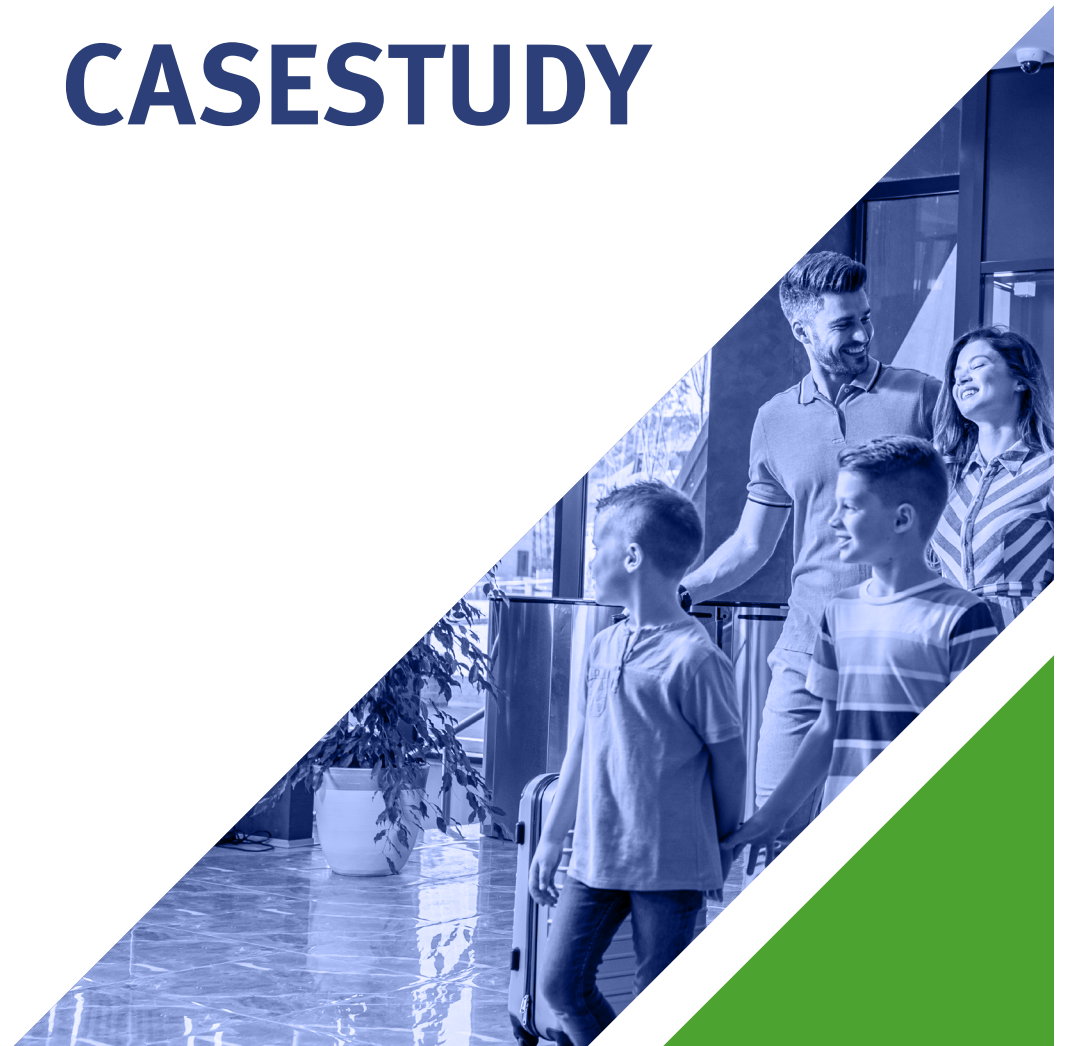


# UNITY THEATRE

 **HOCHIKI**  
**CASESTUDY**





## STEPPING OUT OF THE DARK: HOW FIRESCAPE NEPTO SAVED THE SHOW AT UNITY THEATRE

Liverpool's Unity Theatre, a champion of new writing, social justice, and community engagement, boasts a rich history intertwined with the building it calls home. Founded in 1983 by unemployed actors and writers, the company initially resided in a converted warehouse. By 2003, they found their permanent home on Hope Street – a former synagogue built in 1957. This unique space, once a place of worship seating 450, now serves as a vibrant theatre and a living testament to a bygone era of radical theatre.

The name “Unity” itself reflects a legacy. It's a connection to a national movement that significantly impacted British theatre and politics. The story begins in the 1930s with the birth of Merseyside Left Theatre, which later became Merseyside Unity Theatre in 1944. Renowned for their experimental and politically charged productions, this company's final act was securing the Hope Place building and transforming the former synagogue into the thriving Unity Theatre we now know.

Today, Unity Theatre thrives as a registered charity, producing a mix of professional and amateur productions while fostering community engagement through workshops and mentoring schemes.

An organisation such as this relies heavily on the generosity of private benefactors and support from arts funding to keep the lights on and the doors open. It also relies on specialist companies to help with some of the more complex upkeep of the building, such as fire safety.

Realising that their emergency lighting system was rapidly ageing, Technical Manager Xenia Bayer knew this would be a massive project to undertake, and financially impossible with ever tightening theatre budgets.

This was when hope flickered back on. “While exploring options and regulations with the ABTT (Association of British Theatre Technicians), I stumbled upon a brochure by Hochiki detailing their newly launched FIREscape Nepto system. It felt like a dream come true for our theatre. The features were perfect for this environment”.

Some of the key features of FIREscape Nepto which appealed to this theatrical mind were:

- **Intelligent and Self-Sufficient:** No more tedious lamp replacements or manual system checks. The system runs self-tests, stores reports, and alerts the owners to any maintenance needs.
- **Energy Efficient:** The low voltage system promised significant energy savings, a win for both budget and the environment.
- **Adjustable Light Levels:** This can be a game-changer for performance spaces. There is regulatory compliance for light levels, but also the ability to achieve complete “blackout” for scene changes and actor entrances/exits. FIREscape Nepto can offer both.

“It seemed too good to be true. Reaching out to Hochiki, I hesitantly inquired about sponsorship possibilities, offering site visits for interested parties. Thankfully, after email exchanges and a site visit, Hochiki offered an incredible solution: a complete replacement system”.

The team at Hochiki worked closely with the installation company Grainger Fire and Security, experts with over 40 years’ experience in the industry. Hochiki initially reached out to the company’s MD, David Wardman to ask if they would like to get involved in this local charitable project and they jumped at the chance. “We’ve worked with Hochiki products for a number of years, always successfully, so the opportunity to work install this new to the market emergency lighting system as well as help keep this local hub of the community open was something we were keen to get involved in”.

Leading on the project Will Taylor comments on the ease of installation. “Hochiki products are famously easy to install, and FIREscape Nepto was no different. The theatre is quite a large space and so we initially scoped 5 to 6 days for the installation plus commission. In the end it only took 4 days, plus a day for commissioning. We were also able to retrofit using a lot of the old cabling to save on waste, and the new system enabled us to fault find any issues with that old cable so we could replace it if needed.”

Bayer continues “The communication with both the Grainger team and Hochiki throughout has been brilliant, we were able to work around shows all the while ensuring everyone’s safety. The new system is so much more aesthetically pleasing and saves so much space compared to the previous bulky system. The best outcome is that over the year, based on the old system running costs, we predict we’ll be able to save almost 40 times the energy which equates to just less than £900 in savings a year. In our world that is an incredible amount of money which we will be able to plough back into the theatre and the many projects we run for our local and wider theatrical communities”.

Overjoyed and incredibly grateful, the Unity Theatre looks forward to welcoming artists, communities, and audiences under the safe and efficient glow of the FIREscape Nepto system. “This new system won’t just replace our old one – it will transform our day-to-day operations and ensure we can continue to shine a light on the arts for years to come, thanks to Hochiki – the show can go on”.

To learn more about the project and FIREscape Nepto head to the Hochiki Website: <https://hubs.la/Q02yfg820>

**For further information please contact:**

Paul Adams, Hochiki Europe, E: [padams@hochikieurope.com](mailto:padams@hochikieurope.com)

**For Press Information and hi-res images, please contact:**

Celia Felgate, Fresh Nous E: [celia.felgate@freshnous.com](mailto:celia.felgate@freshnous.com)

T: [+44 \(0\) 1905 780 810](tel:+44201905780810)

For over 100 years Hochiki has led the way in the design and manufacturer of innovative life safety solutions. Its leading edge commercial and industrial fire detection and emergency lighting products have acquired global acceptance as the benchmark for high-integrity and long-term reliability.

With global group sales turnover exceeding £400m, Hochiki is a wholly independent, multinational, publicly listed company with over 2000 employees working across six manufacturing plants, 38 sales offices and 14 subsidiaries.

Its ongoing commitment to manufacturing innovation ensures customer satisfaction and its production facilities in Japan, the USA and Europe offer international continuity in quality, service and supply.