If an instrument is a means for making something possible, any building could become one. Given its careful versatility, however, this building pushes such condition to its limits, combining the simplicity of the Elizabethan theater (mounted on an open-air patio surrounded by grandstands), the comfort and mutability of contemporary theater, a panoramic view of the city and the understanding of the place's own history as well as Poland's political positioning in the European sphere.
Two fundamental assumptions converge in the project: one of historical nature and another of political-cultural nature. On the one hand, at the beginning of the seventeenth century this Baltic city had already known the wooden building of the Elizabethan Theater; then, after about four centuries, a new theater is built on the same place but in a completely different urban and landscape context. On the other hand, in 2004 Poland officially enters the European Union, a turn of 180° degrees from East to West; the same year, the international competition for the design of the new Elizabethan Theater was held, as if to represent the reversal of the political horizon on the stage of Gdansk were to be instrumental.
Formally and functionally, the building is divided into three main parts: the walkway around the outer edges, the theater itself and the administrative area. The outer edges are public passageways leading around the whole complex. This new pedestrian urban platform lies six meters above the entrance level, offering a new viewpoint of the city. Functionally, the edges ensure escape ways from the theater and pedestrian links with all the levels of the complex, including the basement at five meters below ground floor.

On the outside, three general aspects characterize the theater’s silhouette: volumes, masonry ribs and an openable roof. Two very distinct parts emerge from the volume. The first belongs to the Elizabethan theater, and sets the height of the building to 12 meters. The second belongs to the 18-meter high scenic tower, which is the highest panoramic point due to technical systems and symbolic requirements. When the roof is open, the view from the tower includes the interior of the theater. The masonry ribs in the outer walls characterize the volumes of both the theater and the scenic tower. On the outside, these indicate the rhythm of the modular indoor structure, while they are needed to absorb the pressure that the open ‘wings’ of the roof exert on the walls below in order to resist the force of northerly winds.

The openable roof comes from typological and symbolic needs. With its wings opened straight up, the edges reach a height of 24 meters, concluding the vertical progression of levels (6, 12, 18, 24 meters). In plan, the project assumes the figure of a diapason with its main axis oriented east-west. The scenic tower transversely divides the theater area from the administrative one. Its central position restricts the pathways of the outer pedestrian edges. All the
horizontal and vertical walkways are located within the perimeter of the diapason (3.6 meters thick). This figuratively autonomous piece is set back from the outer edges precisely to express the spatial hierarchy between the different formal systems.

In contrast to the visual weight and compactness of the outer walls, the interiors of the building are covered in two types of light wood: one for the Elizabethan theater and one for the suspended volume above the foyer. For the former, the typological module of $2.8 \times 2.8 \times 2.8$ meters is taken from the one found during archaeological excavations on the site. In plan, there are six modules on the two long sides and five on the short one, making a C-shaped figure. All in all, there are 51 modules for about 600 spectators. Wooden columns with an internal steel structure are positioned in accordance with the modular pattern of the galleries. The Elizabethan and Italian stages are fully mechanized to meet the theater’s varying configuration needs. The stage movement technology is located in the base below the floor slab. The stages are mobile, almost in response to the wings of the roof. In the foyer, a suspended box offsets the external masses. A large double-height room overlooks the different types of voids that distinguish and envelop the entry spaces, from the museum area in the basement to the galleries of the theater itself. When the wings open, the sunrays can potentially reach the basement.

The administrative area contains all secondary activities of the theater: offices, surveillance, restaurant, dressing rooms, and so on. It is a two-floor volume with a roof terrace at the same level and outer edges from which it is possible to access the square roof opened to the entire city: another unexpected place for representations; the third ‘stage’. ARQ
Planta emplazamiento / Site plan
E. / S. 1:5.000
Detalle DD / Detail DD
E. / S. 1:125

Detalle EE / Detail EE
E. / S. 1:200
Planta nivel -1,20 m / Plan level -1.20 m
E. / S. 1:500

Planta nivel 3,20 m / Plan level 3.20 m
E. / S. 1:500
Elevación poniente / West facade
E. / S. 1:250

Corte CC / Section CC
E. / S. 1:750
TEATRO SHAKEESPEARIANO DE GDANSK
GDANSK SHAKESPEAREAN THEATER

Arquitecto / Architect: Renato Rizzi
Colaboradores / Collaborators: Roberto Giacomo Davanzo, Andrea Rossetto, Emiliano Forcelli, Susanna Piscicilla, Denis Rovetti, Lorenzi Sivieri, Luca Sirdone, Ernst Struwig, Andrea Mozzato
Ubicación / Location: Gdansk, Polonia
Cliente / Client: GTS (Gdański Teatr Szekspirowski)
Cálculo estructural / Structural engineering: Armando Mammino

Construcción / Construction: Bud-Invent
Materiales / Materials: Ladrillo, basalto, madera, piedra de Istria, cobre / dark brick, basalt, wood, istrian stone, copper
Presupuesto / Budget: 7.300 $/m²
Superficie construida / Built surface: 4.000 m²
Año de proyecto / Project year: 2004-2010
Año de construcción / Construction year: 2011-2014
Fotografías / Photographs: Matteo Piazza
Renato Rizzi  
<rizzir@iuav.it>

Architectural degree, iuav, Venice, 1977. From 1984 to 1992 he worked with Peter Eisenman at the Romeo and Juliet project, Verona (1986 Stone Lion Award at the III Biennale of Architecture in Venice), Parc de la Villette, Paris (1986), Xxvii Triennale di Milano (1986), Rovereto City of Immanence (1987), and Monte Paschi, Siena (1988). Has held the any magazine’s international seminars in Buenos Aires, Tokyo, Seoul, among others. In 1992 he returns to Italy to become Associate Professor at iuav University of Venice. Rizzi has been invited as lecturer at Harvard University, King’s College, Cairo University, among others. His Shakespearean Theatre at Gdansk has been awarded the SARP Award of the National Association of Architects of Poland (2015) the Polityka’s Architectural Award PAA (2015) and the Gold Medal for Italian Architecture (special mention, 2015).