



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

It should be noted the views expressed in this evaluation are intended to represent, as far as possible, an objective aesthetic judgement. Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences.

Artist/Company:	The Arches
Venue:	The Arches, Glasgow
Title of Event:	Amada
Type of Event:	Performance (Re-mount of original production, with new cast)
Date of Visit:	05 September 2008
Overall Rating:	Good

(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses. If the management of the event affects the overall enjoyment of the event, please comment, but the overall rating should be based on the artistic merit of the event.)

Amada is a good, well-crafted, well-acted, adaptation of an interesting story. The physical and visual storytelling, as well as the spoken narrative, were engaging for the audience. On a minor note, the stylistic artifice of the piece at times slightly hindered engagement with the humanity of the characters. Lovely use of music in the performance. A very successful piece of theatrical storytelling.

Name: **Tim Licata**

Date: 06 / 09 / 2008

Specialist Advisor

Please circle the relevant title

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named above. It has been prepared by either a specialist Advisor, or an officer of the Scottish Arts Council, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work and to the management of the venue, if the venue is core funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

The report will form evidence for the Artistic Leadership and Public Engagement sections of the Quality Framework and be taken into account in assessing the work of the producing company in relation to applications for funding to the Scottish Arts Council. It may also be used by the Joint Board to report on the overall performance of its funded organisations.

Evaluators should enter their rating under each section, explaining briefly their reason for the rating with reference to their comments under each section. Ratings should be given in accordance with the following:

- 1 - Very Poor** – standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- 2 - Poor** – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.
- 3 - Competent** – routine rather than especially interesting.
- 4 - Good** – well conceived and executed
- 5 - Excellent** – conceived and executed to a high standard.

1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, with particular reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the following:

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Vision and imagination of work - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.	Good	Good vision and imagination. A well crafted, highly theatrical and imaginative telling of an interesting, engaging and moving tale. Good skills in execution, involving the exploration of many storytelling devices; physical, visual and narrative. I have previously seen Cora Bissett's work as a performer and musician. I am not surprised that her work as a director adheres to the same high standards of quality.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned. If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.	Good	Amada was artist-led by Cora Bissett. Originated through the Arches Award for New Directors in 2007. Very appropriate for this scheme (see below). A good, strong adaptation and theatrical telling of an interesting, engaging and moving story. Very appropriate piece for the touring venues.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes. Education events – see ¹ below for guidance	Excellent	Amada was created as part of the Arches Awards for New Directors in 2007. The Award exists to give support and a creative platform to new and emerging directors to explore, create and produce work to a professional standard. Amada is an excellent example of this process at work. Arches support allowed Cora Bissett to create a highly theatrical, strong and moving adaptation of a short story involving a well planned creative process. I believe the aims were primarily artistic: "...to re-create the colour, passion, sensuality and emotional landscape of Allende's tale Amada." (flyer description) - Very successfully achieved. Also to allow Cora Bissett to explore her craft as a director, also very successful. CB used a collaborative, creative process, involving many storytelling techniques; physical (dance, movement), visual (design, light, projection, shadows) and narrative (text, music). First presented to high acclaim in 2007, this is a re-tour of the performance in Scotland – good touring life.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Good	The cast was strong and a good ensemble. 3 actors and 2 musicians, all professional, technically skilled performers. Itxaso Moreno portrayed the central character, Maria, with great skill, quite magically transforming from young child to older woman through the character's journey. Equally, Alia Alzougbi and Richard Pyros played multiple characters with distinction (good use of rhythm, voice, physicality etc. to create distinct characters). Sharp, engaging performances.

¹ Education is a bridge between artform excellence and increased access and participation, and it is people centred. Providing opportunities for learning and progressing in an artform or using an artform to address other, non-artistic, outcomes are equally valid; in either case a high quality strategic approach is required in order to benefit the participants and the organisation. Delivery can be through workshops, post/pre-show discussions, outreach work, etc aimed at any age group.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Good	It was very refreshing to see many elements, visual and physical, well explored and well used to communicate this story. Good, original use of movement by the actors both to portray characters and more abstractly to communicate the story. Nice gestural language created during the piece in movement and shadow play.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	A very good, concise script adapted from Isabelle Allende's short story, Simple Maria. Adapted by Cora Bissett and Francis Gallop, with input from the original cast. CB says in programme note, "With fantastically inventive actors, ...myself and Francis Gallop...devised every scene from scratch, sometimes based on little more than a one-line description of an event." This was extremely well done. I believe it was important that FG was designer as well as dramaturg and co-creator, as the visual design of the production was an integral part of the storytelling. CB & FG knew what not to say, as well as what to put into words. There was a great appreciation of language and translation used in the text. Lovely to hear some narration in Spanish, giving a nice flavour and texture to the story and environment. Slight drawbacks: the overall rhythm/intensity of scenes could have used more variation, seemed slightly even throughout. All in all, a very good adaptation and a good result of a collaborative process.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	Good, clear, imaginative direction using many storytelling devices; physical, visual and narrative. An interesting mix of devices, creating a very theatrical style. This was successful, however at times I thought the artifice of the storytelling hindered the audience's ability to engage with the humanity of the characters. Character portrayals were well directed and extremely clear, occasionally to the point of slight caricature, this seemed intentional and part of the created style of the production – appropriate for a 'magical realism' story – but again perhaps hindered engagement with humanity of characters. Overall pacing of dramatic construction could use some more variation in rhythm and intensity. Good use of humour to offset dramatic moments. Great use of visual storytelling with movement, shadows and design. This re-mounting of Amada had only a 2 week rehearsal period and in this respect Cora Bissett, the cast and production team did an excellent job. Direction and performances were very sharp and well rehearsed.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	Live music provided by Galvarino Ceron-Carrasco, guitar, and Nerea Bello; vocals. Music was central to the telling of this story. Good use of music to establish mood, environment atmosphere, emotion, passage of time. Strong professional musicians were an integral part of the story and used to good effect.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Dance, Theatre	Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.	Good	Good, appropriate, simple and economic design. Simple and minimal props used to establish scenes and tell story, good interesting use of 2 screen to divide space and to allow projection and use of shadow play. Good colourful lighting. Interesting and imaginative. Very appropriate for touring.
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>	Good	Technical presentation was good and professionally executed.
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>		Circa 60 people out of circa 100 seats. Well attended. The performance was very appropriate for the audience. The audience response was good. People enjoyed the performance. There was appropriate laughter and good engagement with the story. I would say that the audience was very engaged by the performance for about 90% of the time. Slight loss of engagement at a couple of moments due to even pacing of story. Strong, hearty applause at the end, one person standing. Comments heard after show: "That was wonderful." "Excellent." "They were all so good."
All	Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.	NA	Performance evaluation
All	Outcomes of education activity – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?	NA	Performance evaluation

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and the venue, with reference to the checklist below, including additional comments/observations. Please try to view the venue and the services, and interpretative material as though you had never visited it before eg if you did not know the venue's location, how easy would it be to find your way there, and to find your way around once you had arrived?

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	The Arches, both in terms of space and audience, was well suited to this performance.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Simple A4 programme at venue providing appropriate information.
Publicity/ pre-publicity – leaflets, posters, websites, etc. What is produced, is it easy to understand and where can you get the information? Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.	Well designed flyers of high quality. I did not see posters, but would imagine posters were printed to the same standard as the flyers. The Arches has an excellent website, well laid out information, easy to navigate. Listings in all usual media and events guides.
Ease of booking and payment	Fine. Telephone and online booking available. Daytime box office staff at Arches could have better telephone manner.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Good, central Glasgow.
External signage and signposting	Fine.
Internal directional signage	Good, no signage, but well staffed with ushers for directions.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Fine. Theatre space is wheelchair accessible. Toilets accessible by lift.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	All fine and appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Excellent customer service at venue.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Scottish Arts Council funding prominently acknowledged on publicity materials and website. Arches website appears excellent. Great visuals, good navigation.

² In press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, company's website, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising, recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.) Where the event is publicised in the programme brochure of another organisation (eg venue, gallery, etc) then SAC acknowledgement should appear against the particular programme entry for this event.

3. Organisation's Comments (optional)

This is the organisation's opportunity to respond to points raised within this assessment. Please do not feel obliged to fill this section in. In the spirit of the Quality Framework, we would ask that any comments are self-evaluating, providing an insight as to why, if there is, a major disagreement of response between the organisation and the evaluation, in a constructive way.

This will not alter the rating given by the assessment, but will allow the organisation the opportunity to give their opinion/feedback. The Scottish Arts Council reserves the right to edit comments if they are deemed to be libellous or defamatory.

As the Scottish Arts Council implements the Quality Framework internally, we intend to publish artistic evaluations on organisations that we support regularly on our website. The final artistic evaluation, including the organisation's response will be published on a quarterly basis on our website.

Please keep your response to max 500 words. If we do not hear from you in 15 days, we will assume that you do not want to respond.