



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:	Dundee Rep Ensemble
Venue:	Dundee Rep
Title of Event:	Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
Type of Event:	<i>performance</i>
Date of Visit:	21st March 2009 evening show
Overall Rating:	Good A very proficient production of a modern classic with an excellent cast
<i>(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.)</i>	
Name: <u> Sandy Maxwell </u> Date <u> 23/03/09 </u>	
Specialist Advisor	<i>Please circle the relevant title</i>

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	A good exploration of a long standing relationship where a couple have resorted to vindictive mind games and are not above using casual visitors to play out their fight. The verbal dexterity of the play is executed well by a well balanced cast
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.	excellent	The Rep director James Brining explains his selection of the play well on a YouTube clip linked from the Rep website. As well as being a vehicle for two of the most experienced actors in the ensemble to tackle meaty roles it gives two recent graduates potentially strong supporting parts. For audiences it gives a substantial modern classic delivered in its full glory. I would slightly question the advisability for actor care of running such an intense 3 ½ hour production as a matinee & evening performance on the same day
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	good	A valid and successful staging of a modern classic allowing the audience to experience the full force of Edward Albee's play rather than the Burton / Taylor film version.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	excellent	Irene MacDougal plays an excellent gin soaked Martha jousting with her academic husband and playing with the young couple. Robert Paterson's George was not as cruel and vindictive as I expected and his cardigan glasses and whisky glass permanently to hand reminded me slightly of an intellectual Denis Thatcher. George & Martha successfully dominated & manipulated the young couple played by Alan Burgon & Gemma McElhinney who both stood their corners well in a production dominated by two experienced actors.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/A	
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	good	Not a work that I have read or seen before but appears to be a faithful treatment of a play where the text is all important

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
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	good	The play's strength is the quality of the dialogue and James Brinning clearly brings out the humour as well as the tragedy of the relationship between the long married couple. Their verbal and mind manipulating games come across well but at times the function of the naive but equally disturbed younger couple isn't allowed to develop much beyond being a passive audience. The casting is excellent and pace largely sustained despite any significant developments in plot
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	good	The sound design from Ivan Scott skilfully enhances the intensity of the action by long open chords or almost strident jazz and party noises to set the initial scene and at several times.
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	The set by Philip Whitcomb is trust into the front rows of the auditorium. A naturalistic academics open plan room sits in a bleak setting of broken glass and empty booze bottles with an abandoned child's tricycle in front of a cyc with the moon rising and clouds are scudding across it. All successfully set the production in 1960's US and provide a backdrop for the intellectual mind games being played. The use of steps either side to give exits into rest of the house appeared clumsy and out of place. The mirrored ceiling flown above the set was an excellent element of voyeurism for the audience but the finale where it went out and the full cyc was revealed as a blank canvas for the new dawn didn't quite come off.
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 of sound staging & lighting was flawless
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>		50 to 75% of the lowered capacity as the first couple of rows of the stalls were built over. The audience were almost entirely fixated by the production through the 3 ½ hours and applauded very warmly at the end and after each act. For the final Saturday night of the run which had had a very good press it was disappointing that it was not a full house.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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.	N/A	No mention of organised activity that I was aware of.
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)?	N/A	

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 set tried to bring the proximity of the play down from the usual open aspect of the Dundee Rep stage
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The programme was very informative with articles on Albee the play and its subsequent Hollywood film production that it is well known for. The YouTube clips where the director talks about the production also gave an excellent background and reviews were prominently displayed in the foyer.
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.	A very stark poster and leaflet programme design rightly highlighted the importance of the text rather than visual or plot to the production. The Rep's website is clear, fast and informative with excellent sections such as the FAQ's about your visit to the theatre
Ease of booking and payment	Online booking simple and friendly box office staff on pickup. As explained on the website inline booking does not allow for seat selection but centre stage in the stalls was supplied.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Signposting around Dundee to the rep is excellent and on street parking after 6pm easily available close by.
External signage and signposting	Attractive informative and welcoming permanent and show specific information.
Internal directional signage	Directional signage can get slightly lost in a visually very busy interior but there are plenty of staff on hand to assist
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	From external doors onwards access appears good
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	7.30pm for a 3 1/2 hour show could possibly have been earlier but not possible with a matinee on the same day
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Friendly & attentive FOH and in bars
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Well acknowledged in print and on the building

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.