



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:	Mull Theatre
Venue:	Inverness High School (part of DNA festival)
Title of Event:	Brightwater
Type of Event:	performance
Date of Visit:	18/10/2007

Overall Rating: **Good** The idea of exploring the reality behind the myth of Gavin Maxwell was interesting for people who thought they knew the man because of the film. As the programme states, this category of people is of a certain generation (which I fit into.) I'm not sure what audiences who do not fit this category before seeing the play would have made of it? However, the script was structurally interesting and the portrayal of Maxwell as a deeply unempathetic but driven man was convincing. His environmental ideas were ahead of his time and are certainly very relevant today.

Name: Jaine Lumsden	Date: 04/12/2007
Specialist Advisor	Scottish Arts Council Officer <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	The idea of exploring the reality behind the myth of Gavin Maxwell was interesting for people who thought they knew the man because of the film. As the programme states, this category of people is of a certain generation (which I fit into.) I'm not sure what audiences who do not fit this category before seeing the play would have made of it? However, the script was structurally interesting and the portrayal of Maxwell as a deeply unempathetic but driven man was convincing. His environmental ideas were ahead of his time and are certainly very relevant today. Mull Theatre consistently produces good or excellent accessible and more challenging work.
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	Artist-led: company commissioned script from playwright. Programmed in DNA festival. The overall programme had a good mixture of professional accessible and more challenging work from Scotland, UK and Sweden. It also had community and youth theatre work and a range of seminars and workshops.
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	This was sub-titled “the extraordinary life of Gavin Maxwell”, “an exploration of the man by the man” (as the piece was based on Maxwell’s writing) from the programme. The piece did do this as the director’s notes stated people of a certain generation think they know about Maxwell because of the film – but the film did not reflect the reality.
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	Richard Addison and Richard Conlon both playing Maxwell towards the end of his life and as a younger version respectively. These were difficult roles to play as Maxwell was a deeply unpleasant, opinionated man, who was apparently quite cruel in his relationships and certainly extremely selfish. So while the depictions could not be empathetic, they did provide a fully rounded character and some insight into Maxwell’s motivations.

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		N/A see under direction
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	<p>By Jon Pope. This was structurally interesting – flitting between times in Maxwell’s life in no apparent obvious order – but was never confusing. This was based on Maxwell’s writings, which were essentially autobiographical. The piece played with differences: the perceived myth of Maxwell based on the film and the reality; between his younger self who essentially had an enthusiasm for life and his older self who seemed quite tortured, bitter and angry.</p> <p>It was obvious to me from the start that the young anonymous stranger who visited the older Maxwell was his younger self. I’m unclear if there was meant to be a surprise element to this.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Excellent	By Alasdair McCrone. This was essentially a dialogue driven piece, but McCrone provided visual interest and kept the pace up by his use of the set and stage. For example, when the two Maxwells were on a canoe in Iraq was subtly directed. The scenes where the characters were interacting with otter(s) were challenging directorially, as this was difficult to portray convincingly. These were skilfully directed and avoided any clumsiness. The ending of the first half when the characters left the stage as part of the action was imaginative and effective.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	Music/sound by Martin Low. This worked well with the production.
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	<p>Well designed set by Alicia Hendrick which was adaptable and provided everything that was required without being overly fussy. It would have been suitable for a touring show.</p> <p>Lighting by Mick Andrew, which worked well with the set.</p>
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>	Competent	Professionally presented

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.		
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>		Small (c.20) but appreciative.
All	<p>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.</p>		N/A
All	<p>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)?</p>		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	There was no disguising that we were in a school hall, but with this proviso the venue was suitable.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Informative programmes that were well designed
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.	DNA festival brochures, websites (Mull and DNA)
Ease of booking and payment	Booked for me through the booth (electronic ticketing)
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	.Extremely difficult. There was a map in the DNA brochure, but even using this and a more detailed A-Z street map of Inverness we were unable to find it. We finally got there after we'd asked a woman in the street for directions.
External signage and signposting	None
Internal directional signage	None
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Think it would have been accessible
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Fine
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Front of house friendly
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Acknowledged

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.