



### 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.

<b>Artist/Company:</b>	<b>Mull Theatre</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Inverness High School</b>
<b>Title of Event:</b>	<b>Brightwater</b>
<b>Type of Event:</b> (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	<b>Performance</b>
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	<b>18/10/07</b>
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	<b>Good</b>
<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>	
Brightwater was an intense and intimate production that explored the life of Gavin Maxwell from the perspective of his isolated existence in his later years. The production seemed well suited to its challenging 19-island tour.	
At times I felt that individual performances were pitched too intensely for the subject matter and intimate staging.	
Name: Rebecca Robinson	Date: 19/10/07
Specialist Advisor    x    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	I thought Brightwater was an intense and intimate production, which was professionally produced and provided some insight into the complex life of its subject matter. Exploring the life of Gavin Maxwell from the perspective of his isolated existence in his later years, this seemed a very suitable piece for Mull's 19-island tour. Brightwater was a more lyrical and, perhaps in some ways, more accessible production than other work that I've seen from Mull Theatre recently (e.g. Cyprus, Macbeth).
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	Jon Pope was commissioned by Mull Theatre to write Brightwater, based on the life of Gavin Maxwell. The performance that I saw formed part of the 5 day Drama Na –h-Alba festival: "Scotland's International Theatre Arts Festival and Forum". The festival offered a wide variety of theatre productions from both Scotland and further afield in venues in and around Inverness. It seemed appropriate that Mull Theatre - as an Island based company - should have work presented as part of this festival.
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 <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	good	The production succeeded in its stated aims of conveying a story of rural Scottish life based on an actual account to the stage and of bringing "Maxwell's life and work to the attention of a new generation who may not know anything about him" (Directors introduction, programme). However, I was not sure that the environmental message – suggested in the programme and website –came fully to the fore.
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	Richard Addison brought a lightness and energy to the older Gavin Maxwell. Richard Conlon played the younger Maxwell with passion and intensity.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/a	

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<b>Artform</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
Theatre	<b>Script</b> – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	The script, by Jon Pope, was based and inspired by the books of Gavin Maxwell and informed by Douglas Botting’s biography. The script provided an impression of Maxwell’s powerful emotional intensity and the dialogue between Maxwell’s older and younger self helped to dramatise his internal conflicts and tensions. However, I did sometimes have to struggle to follow the narrative and I also felt that some prior knowledge of Maxwell’s life and work was necessary for a full appreciation of the text.
Theatre, Dance	<b>Direction</b> - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	Overall the direction (by Alistair McCrone) helped to create an intense and intimate theatrical experience. However, at times, I felt that Conlon’s performance was pitched too intensely for both the subject matter and the intimacy of this particular theatrical setting and that this perhaps stood in the way of any real relationship/ engagement between the two characters. I found some of the staging (e.g. when Conlon crouches behind the box at the beginning) a little awkward and the pace, at times, too slow.
Dance, Theatre	<b>Use of music</b> – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Competent	Generally, I thought the music (music and sound designed by Martin Low) worked well with the piece although I did find that the music, at times, demanded an emotional response. The sound effects were not always synchronised with the movements (e.g. the gunshots)
Dance, Theatre	<b>Design</b> – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.	Competent	The set (designer – Alicia Hendrick) comprised a blue, wave-patterned, painted back-drop/curtain, a down stage ‘traditional’ drawing room (2 armchairs, drinks table, light etc) and a long thrust front stage area. Although the set appropriately invoked the sense of a seascape, the impression of a natural environment was undermined, I felt, by the use of, what appeared to be, synthetic material - particularly for the floor ‘cloth’ and the stones (?). I felt that the costumes appeared a little overly clichéd. The lighting mainly seemed appropriate for the production – although I felt that, at times, I was overly conscious of the lighting changes. The set was necessarily simple and adaptable for its challenging tour.
All	<b>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</b>  Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).  Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang  Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one,	good	The production was presented professionally from a technical point of view.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.		
All	<p><b>Audience</b></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>		There were approximately 12 audience members from a fairly mixed demographic. The audience seemed mainly attentive throughout.
All	<p><b>Additional Interpretative activity</b> – 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><b>Outcomes of education activity</b> – 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?*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Suitability of the venue for the event	Although perfectly able to accommodate the production, I felt that this large hall in Inverness High School was not an ideal venue for such an intimate show (although a larger capacity audience may have made the venue feel less cold and cavernous). I also found the very visible lighting rig (not part of Mull Theatre's set) distracting.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The temporary box office / table in the foyer of the school displayed flyers, brochures etc for this and other productions playing at the Drama Na h-Alba festival. The programme contained interesting information including production list and biographies and introductions from the writer and director. Photographs from Gavin Maxwell's life on the front and back pages of the programme gave an added a sense of authenticity and intimacy to the production.
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.	The production was advertised in all DNA publicity materials (e.g. web site, brochure) and on Mull Theatre's web site. All information was easy to understand. There were posters and billboards advertising the DNA festival in various locations in Inverness and surrounding areas. I found the billboards and the main festival image slightly cluttered and difficult to read.
Ease of booking and payment	I had no problems either booking online through the booth and or picking up my ticket at the venue on the night.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Although the High School was marked on the map in the Drama Na H-Alba brochure and was close to the city centre, I had difficulties finding the school. It didn't appear to be on a main transport route.
External signage and signposting	Poor – there didn't appear to be any external signage for the performance outside the venue and it was not obvious that a performance was happening that night.
Internal directional signage	No problem
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Seemed to be ok
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance lasted for approximately 11/2 hours – this seemed appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Box office staff were friendly and efficient.

Criteria	Comment
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	The SAC was acknowledged on all publicity material that I was aware of.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.