



## 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: The Tron, Glasgow**

**Title of Event: Cyprus**

**Type of Event:** (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc) *performance*

**Date of Visit: 16/0607**

**Overall Rating** (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.)

Good

*Cyprus*, written and directed by Peter Arnott, was a well-researched and skilfully crafted distillation of complex ideas that created an engrossing piece of theatre. The style of the piece – a conventional drawing-room thriller – created an excellent vehicle to bring to life an exploration of current international politics.

The production worked at its best when the tension bristled in the dialogue, both spoken and unspoken, in the relationships between the characters.

Name: Rebecca Robinson Date: 16 / 06 / 07

Specialist Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

*Please tick 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	In Cyprus, Arnott managed to distil with clarity and directness, a sense of the manipulative machinations of Western 'intelligence' and international foreign policy over the last forty years - the influence of which threads through the West's current 'war on terror'. Although conventional in its staging and form, with Cyprus, Arnott created an engrossing and alive piece of theatre that worked as both a political and psychological thriller which engaged with issues of the protection of both personal- and national- interests, deception, trust and loyalty. The production worked at its best when the tension bristled in the dialogue, both spoken and unspoken, in the relationships between the characters. Towards the end, when this tension became physicalised and enacted, I felt that some of the production's power and impact was lost.
All	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	This was an updated and revised version of Cyprus originally produced on Mull in 2005 and written and directed by Peter Arnott. The production is touring small to mid scale venues throughout Scotland in May and June 2007.
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	Excellent	Mull Theatre has a broad remit that includes producing "accessible and challenging theatre" (programme) –I felt this production met both of these aims by providing a piece of theatre that was accessible in terms of its conventional structure and style and challenging in terms of its themes. The production also fulfilled its advertised claim of being a "political thriller" as well as being a psychological thriller.
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	As <i>Mike</i> , Mark McDonnell managed to find a suitably precarious balance between the character of a military man pushed to the edge and a cunningly manipulative operator. Mary Wells created a thoroughly believable and fully rounded character with the spirited and damaged <i>Alison</i> . Kern Falconer portrayed <i>Brian</i> , Alison's father and retired military intelligence agent, with a subtle and

<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.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			enigmatic stillness and gravitas – allowing us to believe that he was a man capable of commanding great loyalty while being equally capable of extreme cruelty.
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	<i>Cyprus</i> , by Peter Arnott, was a well-researched and skilfully crafted distillation of complex ideas that created an engrossing piece of theatre. Though all the characters were, in many ways, dislikeable and holding dubious motivations, they were at the same time portrayed with depth, humanity and intelligence. The style of the piece – a conventional drawing-room thriller – created an excellent vehicle to bring to life an exploration of current international politics. As mentioned above, I felt that the drama of the ending – although it neatly tied together the plotlines – tended to break the perhaps subtler tensions created in the earlier part of the play.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	I thought that Peter Arnott created an energetic production that was, at the same time, sensitively directed - drawing excellent performances from the well-cast performers. There was an overall aesthetic cohesion to the piece - with the separate elements (set, music, acting, etc) combining well together to create a strong and well-balanced production.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Good	The music and sound design (Martin Low) was incorporated well into the production – with the music providing a strong and atmospheric punctuation to the piece and sound effects being effectively integrated as necessary.
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 (designed by Robin Peoples) - comprised of a fairly conventional living room scene that emanated an air of timeless, upper middle-class comfort – was energised by the use of a back flat painted in strong green that provided a dynamic counter point to the other warmer tones. Costumes (Lin Cunningham) all seemed fairly appropriate for the characters. The lighting (Mick Andrew) mainly provided overall coverage although there was a strong opening image and some good effects with the back flat and through the window. The set looked highly appropriate for the production’s wide touring schedule.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p><b>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</b></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	The production was professionally presented from a technical point of view.
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>	XXX	There were approximately 120 audience members - mainly from the over-forty age-range. The production seemed very appropriate for this audience and I overheard several positive comments both during the interval and after the show. There was very appreciative applause at the end and one curtain call.
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	Excellent – I thought this a very appropriate production for this venue.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There were a few posters on display in the foyer and box office as well as flyers. In the foyer there was also a large board containing stage shots, posters and reviews.
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 on both the venue and company websites and brochures. Posters, flyers and programme were all in glossy, full colour format with the main image being fairly conventionally produced (displaying a photograph of a whisky glass with an image of war superimposed inside the glass). The information of both websites was easy to access and provided clear information. I was aware of a few, all favourable, reviews in the national press.
Ease of booking and payment	No problems
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Tron is in the centre of Glasgow and is easy to access by public transport (in walking distance from underground, train and bus stations).
External signage and signposting	No problems.
Internal directional signage	No problem.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Access to the box office and main auditorium appears to be good.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The timing of the event (starting at 7.30 p.m. and ending at approx. 10.10 p.m., with one 15 minute interval) seemed appropriate to me, although, at least one reviewer mentioned that they felt that the production was slightly over-long.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Good – box office and front of house staff were all very friendly and efficient.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	The S.A.C. were 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.