



## 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: Right Lines in association with Mull Theatre**

**Venue:** Glenkinchie Distillery, Pencaitland

**Title of Event: Accidental Death of an Accordionist**

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

**Date of Visit: Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2008**

**Overall Rating: Excellent**

A well received good night out combining humorous observation of Highland characters, village life and a fast moving plot in a very entertaining piece of comedy theatre. Good use of theatrical techniques, pacey direction and audience involvement (by ceilidh dancing) deliver exactly what it promises in the publicity material. Excellent use of the venues that it performs in make this remount as successful as its previous tours.

*(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.)*

Name: \_\_Sandy Maxwell\_\_ Date: \_31/07/08

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.	excellent	A welcome return of a production that is recalled with fondness and amusement by audiences and venues that it has toured to over the years since it was first performed in 2001. A definite crowd pleaser it is an unpretentious musical comedy where the audience are fully involved by the very credible setting of a village hall ceilidh. A piece of light entertainment well produced and slickly performed it fits well into the repertoire of both Right Lines and Mull Theatre.
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 show fulfils a large demand for quality productions of accessible work that are suitable for touring to non theatre spaces. This has been confirmed by good attendance figures on the tour so far. The 5 day residency at Glenkinchie two weeks into a long tour schedule (including a Fringe run) will give the performance a good opportunity to bed in although the cast appeared to be well settled already.
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	Right Lines have produced an enjoyable musical comedy which fulfils the expectations of their publicity material and aims expressed on their websites. Accidental Death happily makes no attempt to take itself seriously throughout.
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	Brian Smith as Cammy the game keeper and Alasdair Satchel as Sir Alex the Laird excel themselves with the rest of the cast of eight supporting them well. Sandy Brechin's slightly wooden performance is forgiven by his virtuosity on the accordion. The cast warm up the audience in character before the performance and make a good job of involving the audience throughout the hall during the show.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	good	The audience provided the dancing with various Scottish country dances called by the two or three piece ceilidh band. The quality of execution was therefore variable but given the demography of the audience fairly high
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	good	The writers Euan Martin & Dave Smith created very believable if not stereotypic characters. The humour is a blend of clever observations of Highland character and groan producing puns. The play's lead is shared over several parts allowing the fast pace to be maintained but occasionally resulting in a lack of focus that one central narrator/lead would have given the play.

<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
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	excellent	The seating is laid out as for a dance in a village hall (cabaret style around the edges) with a band platform at one end. This gives a wide range of performance space but presents a challenge to keep the whole audience engaged within a promenade/in the round style. The characters have introduced themselves from before the performance starts with impromptu scenes around the bar, outside and box office areas. Mark Saunders handles the potential well bringing the cast and audience together in an imaginative interaction. Small pieces of observational humour such as a character placing no smoking signs out on the tables along with the ashtrays combine with OTT plot developments and culminate in occasional absurd moments such as a choreographed chorus during the dénouement.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	excellent	The performance is held together with primarily live accordion music with occasional support on guitar, small pipes and other instruments. A cd of the music to support the show was available for sale.
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	Simple design (largely featuring tartan) successfully dresses the whole hall. Costume props and staging are all very appropriate to this and I assume all village halls that the show will visit.
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 lighting is basic as the audience is largely lit throughout but technical effects and timing (of events such as blackouts) were fine.
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>		An audience of 50 on a Wednesday night in a hall that could hold potentially up to 150 was adequate to create an atmosphere but still allow excellent sightlines and everyone could get in the floor for the dancing. The structure of the night allowed for much greater conversation amongst the audience than for a usual theatre performance. From people I chatted to it seemed that many had come because of feedback from the previous tours to Pencaitland and several had seen the show previously. The response was very enthusiastic – I think everyone felt that they had had a great night out and were impressed by the inventiveness and skills of the actors.

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	I am not aware of any educational activity that accompanies the tour but as Alasdair Satchel (Mull's Education and participation officer) appears in it this may be successfully incorporated.
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	Very suitable (enhanced by the distribution of samples from the adjacent distillery at the interval)
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Programmes (50p) are well designed and informative. Copies of the spoof Glengirnrie Gazette are distributed as part of the play.
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 poster has come runner up in the Fringe poster design competition and as the overall print standard is high which would be expected from collaboration between two companies that normally produce excellent publicity materials. Both websites are fresh and informative and internet searches evidence extensive circulation of material. A Hi Arts weblog and frequent e newsletters on the production are employed along with conventional print distribution.
Ease of booking and payment	Reservation (no credit card facility) by phone to the distillery visitor centre was easy and box office handled very friendly and efficiently on arrival.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The distillery is well tourist sign posted from all directions with ample car parking, access by public transport would be difficult.
External signage and signposting	Good
Internal directional signage	Good with a large number of presumably distillery staff on hand
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Two motorised wheelchair users were present at the performance I attended and seemed to be easily accessing FOH bar and venue.

Criteria	Comment
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	7.45 for around 90minutes including interval, timing may be slightly shorter than the previous run to accommodate a Fringe run. The performance could have been slightly longer and in some rural venues would possibly be extended by more dancing.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Excellent (not just because of the complementary whiskey)
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	On all print and websites

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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.