



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: Companhia Paulo Ribeiro/ New Territories Festival

Venue: Tramway

Title of Event: Feminine

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 28.02.09

Overall Rating: 5: Excellent

The performance by this Portuguese dance company was part of the New Territories - Festival of Live Art and it was an excellent contribution to the range of performances and installations. The performance, Feminine was a companion piece to Masculine which was performed the on the previous evening. The choreography was excellent, very powerful but full of good humour and surprises with great performances from the dancers.

Name: Ashley Smith

Date: 10 March 2009

Specialist Advisor

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	<p>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.</p>	5	<p>The performance started slow, with lots of talk and naturalistic movement. This built slowly into more choreographed pieces. It featured several clever ideas that worked well. These included: early in the performance, a segment on the floor with the performers legs in the air working their high-heeled shoes (this image became the icon for both the evening's performance and was also used on a range of materials for the festival generally).</p> <p>There was interesting floor work overall; the clever use of a bean bag to act as a ball gown skirt, and a stand out virtuosic solo near the end. In general the choreography offered surprises and the dancers were excellent.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	5	<p>The performance was part of the New Territories - Festival of Live Art and it was an excellent contribution to the range of performances and installations. The festival is known for showcasing excellent and innovative international performance. This piece was a co-production with several entities in Portugal. It has had a range of performances around Europe since September last year.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see ¹below for guidance</p>	4	<p>This is somewhat hard to judge because the piece was responsive to Portuguese poetry by Fernando Pessoa. Some of it was translated in performance but some of it was in Portuguese. There were spoken components drawing on Pessoa's reflections on women and femininity. It was interesting because it wasn't what I expected in terms of a message about gender roles. Though, this was present it was more subtle so that the femininity performed by the women could include the enjoyment and sensuality of femininity as well as reflecting on its restrictions. Thus the reflection came through with a welcome light touch. Though, I wondered if I fully understood the text if I would have felt the same way or would it has come across more didactically.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	4	<p>All of the dancers were very well trained to a high technical standard. They knew the material well and embodied their characters. Each dancer was given the opportunity to solo in the second half of the piece. The final soloist was exquisite. She was tremendously strong and yet had liquid movement.</p>

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	5	The choreography was excellent. Very powerful but full of good humour. This piece made a lot of use of the floor. At times the dancers were almost doing tumbling rather than dance. My main complaint is only that there wasn't enough of it. The show started with a lot of talking and walking around and talking some more. The whole first third really had very little dancing. It was moved along by the actress, who wasn't as charismatic at communicating through dialogue as the other four dancers were at communicating with their bodies. Once the choreography started however it built and built. It explored ideas about women's relationships to each other as well as to their own bodies.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	3	The script included selections from Pessoa's poetry reflecting on women and men and the difference between them. Reflecting less on gender per say but the experience of being a woman. However, I didn't find the interpretation of Pessoa's words to be as affecting as Riberio's choreography.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	4	The staging of the dialogue sections was a bit flabby and all over the place. The performers wandered around without any clear sense of purpose. The choreographic staging however was terrific and made up for this. There were some memorably creative stagings of ranked dancers and tableaux. The casting of the dancers was impeccable – I am less convinced about the actress who did not deliver a poor performance but perhaps didn't deliver as excellent a performance as her dancer counterparts.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	5	The music was a real strength of the piece. There was a mix of popular music from the 70s – notably Frank Zappa – which was blended into a more ambient soundscape. At one point the performers recited the lyrics to a popular song (a story about one woman's multiple marriages) to each other and it was reprised later when the song itself was played.
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.	4	The set design was minimal – an empty stage with a backstage area created behind sheets of clear plastic which allowed an obscured view of the action taking place behind. The costumes were well designed. They featured a stylistic motif of coat over a shell and a skirt over footless tights. High heels played an important symbolic role and were worn and removed strategically. At one point a dancer used hers as a prop dancing the shoes rather than dancing in the shoes. Each character had her own colour and design theme (one had circles, one had triangles, one had stripes etc.) These carried through the clothes and onto each performer's matching bean bag. These were used as skirts to good effect.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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>	4	<p>The lighting was notably good, and was highlighted in a section where the dancers performed in silhouette in very low level light. The musical, technical and light cues seemed to proceed without a hitch.</p> <p>No educational events known.</p> <p>The programme was mediocre quality. A simple two sided A4 sheet photocopied and folded in half; mine was squint. The information inside was adequate, though there were different programmes provided for Saturday's <i>Feminine</i> than provided for Friday's <i>Masculine</i>. Saturday's only had a blurb about that night's performance. I was provided with one from Friday night which included blurbs on both pieces but was in a significantly smaller font – one assumes in order to accommodate the additional information. But, of course its small size makes it difficult to read. The music credit didn't appear to be complete as it didn't say anything about one of the pop songs (the one about marriage).</p>
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>		<p>The piece was certainly appropriate for the Tramway audience. It wasn't particularly challenging or subversive but it was a very solid and enjoyable production. It would likely be a good introductory piece to bring someone who was less acquainted with contemporary dance. The audience filled the large Tramway auditorium, maybe 400+ people. They seemed to enjoy it and have a positive reaction.</p>
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	Very suitable.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Programmes weren't great – see my comments above. The Tramway's seasonal booklets and materials for the New Territories Festival overall however looked terrific.
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.	See above. The advance publicity materials looked good. The website is easy to navigate. <i>Feminine's</i> signature image of the performers legs in the air wearing high heeled shoes was featured on a number of festival publicity materials. Additionally, the choreographer's own website is well designed and helpful in English and in Portuguese.
Ease of booking and payment	I wish I were able to book online but I booked over the phone without a problem.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	It's on a train line and a bus route, each of which run several times an hour. It's however not central and does not have access to the tube. There's not a nearby taxi rank – one has to be phoned. Overall, it still feels a bit of an effort to get there.
External signage and signposting	Understated and stylish
Internal directional signage	Present and functional
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Accessible lift and toilets. The space is big, but it does tend to get crowded with people, tables and chairs. I don't know how easy it would actually be to navigate if one had limited mobility.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Timing was fine
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Service was fine.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Present on all materials

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.