



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	Pitlochry Festival Theatre
Venue:	Pitlochry Festival Theatre
Title of Event:	The Magistrate by Arthur Wing Pinero
Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	Performance
Date of Visit:	29 September 2007
Overall Rating:	Poor
<p>(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.)</p>	
<p>This was a very dated piece which did not engage its audience. While the technical standards of the production were well executed, the performances were overly stylised and archaic and the play had little relevance for any modern audience.</p>	
Name: Lorna Duguid	Date: 22 October 2007
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.	poor	This play was very dated, but could have been more enjoyable if it had been played naturalistically as the basic premise of a newly married woman who has lied about her age to her new husband is very funny. However it was directed unimaginatively and I could not see why it had been selected for performance.
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.	poor	This was a very poor choice as part of the Pitlochry season and several audience members around me said how little they were enjoying it compared to other plays in the season.
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	poor	The programme notes suggest that “this is one of the funniest plays ever” The audience were remarkably quiet given this to be the case. Most of the jokes fell very flat and were so dated in their concept as to be almost incomprehensible to a modern audience.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	competent	I think the lack of success of this play is hard to lay at the door of the actors, who did their best with very poor material. However the style of performance was so archaic as to be a museum piece, which had the effect of further alienating the audience from any aspects of the story which could be humorous.
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.	poor	This was a very poor and dated script that did not reveal any new relevance.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	poor	I found the directorial choices in the production baffling. The actors had obviously been directed to appear as if they were actually performing in the mid 1880's, with exaggerated accents and responses to everything. This removed any identification with them as real people in a dilemma. The main character of Cis was made to be completely ridiculous, and there was no attempt to

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
			square his ludicrous behaviour with the character of his mother, who has lied about her age- there seemed to be no relationship between them at all. I also found it strange to make an actor <u>pretend</u> to light and inhale a cigarette in a scene that did not even cal for it. Perhaps the director was making a point about the smoking ban on stage but he succeeded in making the actor look exposed and foolish. (Director: Ben Twist).
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	n/a	
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.	competent	The set was a straightforward box set depicting various internal rooms. It was well made but a little dull. (Set & Costume Designer: Ken Harrison).
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>	good	Again, technically this was a very well executed production, with very high standards of stage craft.
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>		The audience seemed to completely fail to engage with this piece. Several people left at the intervals and I overheard a number complaining about the dated and unfunny nature of the play. It was compared very unfavourably to the afternoon's matinee of Snake in The Grass. The auditorium was almost full.
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	
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	n/a	

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	curriculum (formal or informal)?		

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	Good
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Good
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.	Good
Ease of booking and payment	Internet booking very easy
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Fine
External signage and signposting	Fine
Internal directional signage	Fine
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Fine
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)	Good, helpful staff who were very friendly
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	In building and programme

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.

While we would accept that this production did not achieve its full artistic potential, the assessor's comments seem unduly harsh to us; on the production, certainly, but also with regard to the play.

All farce depends upon cast and audience enjoying a shared understanding of the social conventions and boundaries of behaviour that govern the characters' actions. The production's principal failing was not to achieve that shared understanding consistently, leading to uncertainty of intention in some performances (prompting excess) and an absence of some clarity in the depiction of the late Victorian social mix (the director's own evaluation for PFT acknowledges this). Pinero's narrative has as much to offer as any early Ibsen in depicting the dilemma of the single woman (or widow) confronted with a smothering patriarchal dictatorship: he simply uses a very different theatrical vocabulary. We agree that this was not always evident from the production, but to dismiss the play as a consequence is to fundamentally misread the interaction between form and content.

While not to excuse the production's flaws, it should also be known that the production suffered greatly from a serious injury to one of the principal cast members on the day the show opened. This resulted in a cancelled second performance and a very slow and difficult opening few weeks, before the performer in question had to withdraw from the production temporarily on medical advice. A replacement had to be quickly rehearsed in at the beginning of July and the original performer was not able to return to the show until mid-August. Such disruptions make it difficult to achieve the kind of fluidity and consistency that work of this nature requires and the production never really settled as a result.

It did, however, feature many more positives than this evaluation would suggest, from witty and highly credible performances from a number of the ensemble to the effective realisation of three very different late Victorian environments in the design. The production was the best attended of the Season and despite substantial audience feedback, not one response has echoed the audience negativity reported in this evaluation. While the critical response in the media was more mixed, not even the least positive view expressed (Joyce McMillan) would support the wholly damning judgements of this evaluation. In short, both play and production seemed at least "competent" to us, an analysis supported by all other available evidence. To account the work "poor" in so many categories puts the assessor out of step with the consensus.

We would also make one specific comment: the smoking business referred to in 1 – Direction is required by Pinero in a stage direction for reasons that should be obvious. Cis thinks he's a fourteen year old boy, but he's actually a nineteen year old with all the appetites of a young Victorian gent about town. In the opening twenty minutes of Act 1, Pinero seeks to demonstrate all of those appetites, so he has Cis drink, gamble, chat up women – and smoke.