

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:	Outlying Islands
Type of Event:	Play
Date of Visit:	03 / 09 / 08
Overall Rating	Excellent
Name: Chris Dolan	Date 05 / 09 / 08
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	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.	5	<p>Profound, sensual, moving drama, both in the script and its execution.</p> <p>I saw the excellent Traverse production and, if anything, Ken Alexander's direction enhances even further the depth, range and beauty of Grieg's script.</p> <p>The overall feel was utterly spellbinding, achieved by a unity of cast, lighting, mood and music. Yet the sensuality – and comedy – did not obstruct either the words or what they suggest.</p> <p>Wonderful to see a terrific play being given such professional tender care in repertory theatre.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <p>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	Part of the rep season – a courageous choice, earned by programming the likes of Habeas Corpus
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>	5	Grieg's play succeeds because it is not 'about' any one thing. It deliberately blurs – objectivity with voyeurism, sanctuary with invasion, science and sex, morality and acquisition, Scotland and false belonging... Alexander's production allows all these elements to intermingle, with slow, considered objectivity.
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>	5	<p>Grant O'Rourke: compelling, unruly and lonely. His Oxbridge scientist never overplayed, the difficult journey from Robert's arrival on the island to his death intelligently developed, and nuanced.</p> <p>Joel Sams: His decent, awkward, morally-bound John a difficult part to play, but Sams managed it with wit and openness.</p> <p>Martyn James's Kirk solid as stone. Keeps him as a presence even in his stage death.</p> <p>Claire Dargo moves from superficial innocence to wilderness child with great grace and depth.</p> <p>All three combined in a harmonious ensemble.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	4	How the play moves, literally, is key and the cast found a rhythm within the rushing and storms and the pietas. They found island distance on the stage, and a sense of all (and no) time passing.

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.

Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	5	Thank heavens repertory theatres mount new productions of important modern Scottish plays. David Grieg's script is now well-known, which did not prevent this production from being bold with it. The imminence of death and loss, of human attempts to harness nature, destruction and creation inseparable... In all his work Grieg is shaping a language for Scottish drama, borrowing from Stevenson, Douglas Brown, and more modern plays (Knives and Hens, The Angels' Share, Bondagers, Sabina) but casts his net well beyond our shores. This production got the expanse, and the confinement, of Outlying Islands.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	5	Alexander negotiated an evenness of tone in a piece which moves from dead calm to storm and back again. The mainly young cast a risk that paid off, they were confident and assured in the world of the play. The direction did not labour any given reading of the text, but allowed the whole to speak for itself. Nudity and explicit sex are a danger in theatre – they can break the drama, snuff out the magic. Here, the sexuality was powerful, placed within the difficult balance between realism and romanticism. The humour, too, is tricky to pull off; the production managed it. (Only once, during John and Ellen's lovemaking scene did it undercut the drama.) The lowering light, island soundscape, and rugged scenery all enhanced the overall piece.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	5	Jon Beales' music dreamy, dramatic and judicious. Never overused.
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.	5	In a sense, much as you would expect, and just as the script demands. A craggy outcrop, a ruin. But the shadowy design, the half-light, glowing and glowering skies all contributed to the mood and tension.
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement 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, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.	4	Technically faultless – almost. The song of the unseen bird sample No 1 was too loud and too long. Seems an odd complaint – and it hardly ruined the show – but it was intrusive and (I guess) accidentally funny. Every other element worked together to deepen the spell and tell the story.
All	Audience Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent,		Not as large an audience as for Habeas Corpus, unsurprisingly. Still a more than satisfactory turnout. Several overheard comments later wishing that there was more of that kind of theatre and that quality. During the performance itself, you could hear a pin

	<p>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>drop (when a storm wasn't raging onstage). The Pitclochry audience accepted the nudity and (deviant? depends) sexuality easily. A compliment to them, and the production.</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>		<p>Interesting articles in the season programme.</p>
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>		

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	Perfect.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	No programme for individual shows, but the seasonal programme is cheap enough (£4.00) and informative.
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.	Fine.
Ease of booking and payment	Hard to get through on phone.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Beautiful.
External signage and signposting	Fine.
Internal directional signage	Fine
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Good
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Began on, and ran to, schedule.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Yes

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.