



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

This evaluation is intended to represent an objective aesthetic judgement. **Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences wherever possible.**

Artist/Company:	PFT	
Venue:	Pitlochry Theatre	
Title of Event:	A Servant o ' Twa Maisters	
Type of Event:	Play	
Date of Visit:	22/8/09	
Overall Rating:	Good	
	<p><i>(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.)</i></p>	
	<p>PFT is a very professional operation, so there I no question of the management impairing the experience of the work itself. I think the particular strengths of the shows are consistently the production values, with very adept technical support, the pleasing appeal of seeing an ensemble in action, the diversity of the programme that allows you to see a variety of genres back-to-back. In the case of this particular show, Goldoni is tricky material. It is essentially a blend of commedia and farce and a vehicle for a star comic turn. It must be played at breakneck speed to maximise the mirth and minimise any reflection on its absurdity. Sometimes this performance lacked some of that necessary momentum, in part exacerbated by the visually attractive but slightly cumbersome design. Quicker changeovers would have been a boon. It remains a solid and reliable show that I found Good overall.</p>	
Name:	Jack Bradley	Date: 25/8/09
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 on 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 future 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:

Very poor- standard falls well below what is acceptable.

Poor - not well conceived and executed

Satisfactory

Good - well conceived and executed

Very Good – well conceived and executed to a very good standard

Excellent – Inspiring and executed to an exceptionally 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of ideas • if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons 	Satisfactory	This is my second visit to PFT and the standard matches my previous experience. In both cases, the key defining aim is to provide good, accessible theatre produced to a highly professional standard. As to the play itself, a farcical comedy, it is inevitably ideas-lite, a good-natured divertissement that never pretends to be anything else than it is.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? • If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	Good	The six plays presented this summer fall under a banner of "Home". This has been loosely defined to include plays set in Scotland, plays by Scots and adaptations of Scottish novels. This allows for both classic titles such as the re-located Goldoni as well as new-ish plays by living writers such as Simon Donald and Liz Lochhead. It also allows for the season to span several centuries, which in turn allows for widely differing designs and settings. From the grimy inner-city of LIFE OF STUFF to the commedia costumes of 18 th Century Edinburgh.
All	Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? • How well did it communicate the artistic themes? • How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? Education events – see ¹ below for definition	Good	Every year, PFT try to have a unifying theme to their Season. It's a clever marketing device to encourage people to come and see all six plays. This was one of two shows I saw on the 22 nd . Whilst the project's banner of "Home" for 2009 is a loose one, I did feel that taken together the plays would generate a strong sense of scottishness and what that means exactly. Obviously the period pieces give a sense of history, but the modern plays ask the question what is it to be scots now, whilst the Muriel Spark feels like an important bridge across the 20 th Century. So if the question is one of Identity, I think the Season goes some way to making its audience think about that bigger question.
All	Performers/tutors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments. • How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience? • In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop? 	good	The PFT has a company of 16 that share the six play rep. There are certain seasoned campaigners. In this year that includes Martyn James in his 22 nd year as well as many newcomers. Few actors are straight out of training but the majority tend to be relatively new to the profession. The season, asking them to play in a number of genres, is both satisfying for actor and audience alike but can also tax them. The thigh-slapping heroes of SERVANT were handsome but not necessarily as 3-dimensional as they might have been. The actresses generally acquitted themselves better, but then they are the stronger parts. The one exception was Gavin Jon Wright, who played Archie, the mix of witty servant and hapless fool out of his depth. He has good comic gifts and the

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
			audience were engaged by his anarchic quality. Space should also be found to commend both the director and the company members for quality of comic characterisation among the unnamed parts. These walk-ons were finely delineated and added even more humour, esp. in the dining-room scenes.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work original? • How was the space used? • How many dancers were there and how were they used? • How long was the piece? 	Satisfactory	<p>Choreography was really confined to two moments. The first was a sword fight sequence which, as was appropriate for a comedy, lacked any real sense of peril. Indeed, the female involved, Sarah Burnett, trounces the rather fop-ish Sandy, but this was in keeping with the play's light one.</p> <p>At the curtain, the play ends with a reel that allows the actors to take their bow to accompanying music. This was a success and caught the right mood for the conclusion of this <i>Feel Good</i> comedy.</p>
Theatre	Script Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 	good	<p>As a Sassenach, it took me a few minutes to adjust to Victor Carin's adaptation. It was not helped by the fact that the play, set in 18th Century Edinburgh, with visiting characters from the borders, is comprised of a language that is both deliberately archaic and, I suspect, slightly made up for comic purpose. I believe it is a landmark translation from the 60's, first seen at the Lyceum. Given it is a fudged dialect it is not likely to date, but it did occur to me that, with Scotland enjoying a dramatic renaissance, it is a shame a living writer had not been asked to try their hand at a new version. However, in the end, a Goldoni script is not known for its sophistication. It is after all, a template for the ensuing commedia and clowning and comic business that the situations provoke.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Good	<p>This was very efficiently done. If the initial scene took a little time to establish the situation (Goldini's fault) with the arrival of the servant, the play adopted a brisker and more appropriate energy level. Gavin Jon Wright has good comic timing and generally he caught a balance between being the Servant "on the make" and the hapless figure, a victim of events spinning out of control.</p> <p>It is hard to define the play as being interpreted. What Richard Baron has done is achieve a tone of entertaining but harmless misrule (we never think the rivalries will lead to bloodshed, for example) using familiar and stock comedy routines which are the staple of Goldoni's servant/master plays.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 	Satisfactory	<p>A feature of the production was the use of live, traditional music during the scene changes, played by the performers themselves. There is no music credit, but I presume the ditties are traditional. The singing was uneven, in one case, but the overall effect was good in terms of maintaining the sense of time and in facilitating the change overs.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the costumes, set and lighting? • How did it work in the venue? • Was it technically proficient? (eg lighting) 	good	<p>This is a complex multi-location design that must incorporate an Edinburgh House, a street scene, at least two rooms in a tavern. The designer's solution was to have two free-standing frames which could revolve and be turned and unfolded to reveal the detail of different interiors. This was a</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	and sound cues, etc).		<p>practical and generally fluid solution. The minimal furniture was struck by the off-going actors. A small caveat. On one occasion, the logic of the set failed: during the abortive dual suicide scenes, it is not clear where we are (though obviously in a new room in the Inn) and so when the two lovers meet one another, it seems contrived.) There was a rather effective tromp d'oeil at the rear which depicted the Royal Mile and a castle in the receding distance.</p> <p>The costumes were colourful and in period, with the exception of the Harlequin, the servant Archie. In him we had a comic tartan clown that immediately signalled to the audience exactly what to expect. All in all, it was very pleasing on the eye, a combination of colour and light heartedness which was very fitting. Technically, it was a slick show, as you would expect this way into the run..</p>
All	<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the production/event targeted at a particular audience? • Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? • Were you/ engaged/inspired? • Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired? • What was their response? • Approximately how many people were there? • Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? • Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many? • What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? • Were these targeted at specific age groups? <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led eg one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age 	good	<p>As a matinee, it was about 2/3 full. At the height of summer on a beautiful summers day. There was no sense that the play was targeting a particular audience. I have been to PFT before and this was a customary audience, made up of locals and tourists, largely mature in years who seemed largely appreciative of the play. Indeed, they increasingly warmed to it as the strictures of the farce took hold and it was enthusiastically received at the end.</p> <p>For those with special access needs, the theatre has induction loops, audio description and touch tours, if booked in advance. PFT also advertises a post-show discussion with every production.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>range, gender mix?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development • What learning/skills development took place? • What was the quality of the art produced by the participants? • Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project? • How were participants recruited? • Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project? <p>Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?</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
<p>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it easy to find? • Is it on a main transport route? • Are the spaces clean? • What were the sight lines like? • How big was it? 	<p>The PFT is a landmark of the town, nestling on the river bank opposite the town. It is accessible by road or by footbridges.</p> <p>The upkeep of the theatre public spaces is impeccable, as was the auditorium. With a wide proscenium stage and a fan shaped auditorium, the sight lines are excellent for all those seated. It is a spacious 500+ seater auditorium.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? • Is there information on the venue's website? 	<p>There is an easily accessible and informative website, a season programme and season brochure. As you enter the venue, posters carrying critical responses meet you. Posters appear about the town and there is a video trailer in a shop window in the centre of the High Street.</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? • What publicity materials are produced? • Is it easy to understand? • Where can you get the information? • Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²? 	<p>Based in London, I did not have advance publicity of the Festival, but as soon as you begin to “surf” for Pitlochry, Highlands etc, it appears.</p> <p>I would describe the copy for publicity as user-friendly and accessible, appealing and inviting in tone.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of the SAC appears in both the Season programme I purchased and the Season brochure. I'm not sure if it is appropriately sized, but it is no smaller than other funders.</p>

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.

Criteria	Comment																
Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.																	
Ease of booking and payment	I explored their web-site, but then phoned to book. As it happens, the purchased tickets were sent to the wrong address, but I was re-assured by the B.O. that I could turn up on the day and collect substitute tickets. This was indeed the case and at all stages the B.O. staff were friendly and co-operative.																
Timing of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? • Was the length appropriate? 	The play started promptly at 2.00 (the company are on-stage again at 8.00)																
Signage and signposting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the entrance clearly marked? • Is there clear internal directional signage? • Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 	The theatre is across the river from the town centre, but it is clearly signposted. It might benefit from better posting from the railway station. There is a short-cut I found across the dam which shortens the journey for rail-travellers by 10-15 minutes. Signage in the theatre is clear. I did not see Braille signage.																
Access and provision for disabled people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<table border="1" data-bbox="571 887 1251 1406"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>no</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>no</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>yes</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td>no</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	no	Audio description of performances	yes	Captioning	no	Lift/ramp	yes	Accessible toilets	yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	no
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Customer service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) • If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	<p>As I stated above, the B.O. staff were very helpful when I had a slight difficulty with tickets. They also gave me info on taxis etc without complaint.</p> <p>I saw several wheelchair users in attendance who were seen to their places with a minimum of fuss. The location, between the front stalls and rear stalls are among the best places in the House.</p>																

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.

General

The play's title is prefixed with the definite, rather than indefinite article.

The advisor seems to take for granted that the play's origins and the use of farce render it inherently "ideas-lite". The play's key subjects – class, wealth, ownership, ruthless enterprise – all have strong resonances for contemporary Scotland.

1 – Curatorial/programming vision/selection

Rather than being "loosely defined to include plays set in Scotland, plays by Scots and adaptations of Scottish novels", as the advisor puts it, a clear and concise definition of the Season theme (*Home*) is provided in the Season programme: "a celebration of Scottish playwrights and authors, the six plays chosen painting a portrait of Scotland's history, its identity and its culture that reflects most of the virtues (and some of the vices!) of the place that we call home."

1 – Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance

The theming of PFT's summer producing seasons is not, as the advisor claims, "a clever marketing device to encourage people to come and see all six plays". It is an artistic decision that seeks to explore connections and resonances between works that may be from very different periods, genres and styles, but which individually and/or collectively address a particular subject.

1 – Script

The advisor's suggestion that Carin's language is ". . . both deliberately archaic and, I suspect, slightly made up for comic purpose. . . it is a fudged dialect" is wholly inaccurate. Corbett & Findlay describe Carin's language in *Twa Maisters* thus: ". . . his Scots for the most part is a standard central Scots of a traditional variety . . . his dramatic language is generally not archaic; rather, its basis is the spoken country Scots of someone of his generation growing up in the 1930s and 1940s"* . Given the importance of the Scots language tradition, it is disappointing that an advisor without any understanding of this tradition was invited to evaluate this production.

1 – Script

The advisor states: "I believe it is a landmark translation from the 60's, first seen at the Lyceum". Has the advisor been aware of the importance of this work to Scotland's theatre renaissance, he would not, perhaps, have opined that "it is a shame a living writer had not been asked to try their hand at a new version."

1 – Quality of Public Engagement

The advisor paints a somewhat misleading picture of the composition of PFT's audiences. Only 20% of PFT's theatre audience derives from PH postcodes and less than half of this group could genuinely be described as "local". The remainder of the audience hails from all across Scotland and from south of the border. Most of these audience members are repeat attendees at PFT; they are not "tourists", but PFT's core supporters, who simply travel much greater distances to visit PFT than is the case with any other producing house in Scotland. Genuine tourists only amount for some 12% of PFT's theatre audience total.

* *Serving Twa Maisters – Five Classic Plays In Scots Translation*