



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: The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

Type of Event: Play

Date of Visit: 22/8/09

Overall Rating: Very Good

(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.)

PFT is a very professional operation, so there is no question of the management of the event 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 and the diversity of the programme that allows you to see a variety of genres back-to-back.

For this show, I thought the marriage of design, direction and the standard of acting meant this modern classic was imbued with a new freshness. Having worked on a production a decade ago, I was keenly aware that in the wrong hands the play can seem a mere star vehicle for a lead actress. However, if handled correctly, a production can be a telling insight to the power Svengali figures can have both on the micro- and macro-scale. We must be seduced, just as the girls are, but also realise, just as Sandy does eventually, that part of the process of seduction is a partial or temporary blinding of the recipient. Lastly, the play asks an uncomfortable question about the price of loyalty and the moral efficacy of betrayal. A clear and lucid production, I found it Very Good, teetering on excellent overall.

Name: Jack Bradley **Date:** 28/8/09

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	<p>Vision and imagination of work</p> <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 	Very Good	<p>This is my second visit to PFT and the standard matches my previously positive experience. TPoMJB certainly eclipsed the other show I saw on this visit, both incidentally directed by Richard Baron.</p> <p>The production manages to invite consideration of Brodie's dangerous love affair with fascism without sacrificing the appeal of a character that is both theatrically a tour-de-force as well as a convincing portrayal of a hugely charismatic figure. One can vividly see how the girls might have their heads turned and values challenged. It is in essence a thought-provoking study in seduction.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <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	<p>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 18th Century Edinburgh. The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie is not only a fine novel, it was a landmark film and contributed to the sixties British film re-surgence that had begun with Sillitoe, Richardson et al. It was an important contribution to that movement, but it is much more than that because it does not confine itself to thinking about regional identity, it is a piece that explores identity in an international political context.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <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? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Good	<p>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 22nd.</p> <p>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 20th Century, touching upon issues of individualism, the values of education, meritocracy and the insidious effect of dogma on those of an impressionable age. So if the question is one of Identity, I think the Season goes some way to making its audience think about that bigger question.</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
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? 	Very Good	<p>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 22nd year as well as many newcomers. Few actors are straight out of training but the majority tend to be relatively new to the profession. As ever the Season asks them to play in a number of genres, which is both satisfying for actor and audience alike but can also tax them.</p> <p>I am pleased to report that the standard in this show was of a very high calibre. Whilst I can imagine Helen Logan's performance might divide critics: she accentuates Brodie's flamboyance and the Devil-May-Care that thinly disguises her grief-driven insecurities, it remains a compelling, if occasionally two-dimensional performance. By taking a strong line, she has eschewed some of the possible subtleties.</p> <p>The real honours go to Irene Allan as Sandy. Of course, the revisions to the adaptation permit the growth of this character, hers is a much bigger journey now, given the way the flash-forwards to her life in the nunnery reveal the lasting implications of her betrayal of Brodie.</p>
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>Apart from the blocking of the handful of schoolgirls that constitute Brodie's "crème-de-la-crème", this play requires only rudimentary blocking. But if THE SERVANT O TWA MAISTERS requires choreographing a mid-scale piece in an enclosed space, PRIME requires that a handful of actresses suggest an entire school or class. At no time did the space feel too large for this small cast.</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>It was interesting to re-visit this material. The programme describes the text as Jay Presson Allen's latest dramatisation. The revisions were the product of a workshop at the NT a decade ago, when Phyllida Lloyd directed Fiona Shaw in the title role. The reason for the workshop was to attempt to find greater complexity for the character of Sandy and to explore the contradictions of Jean Brodie's troubled soul. The workshop did not result in a wholesale revision of the text, but subtle additions and one or two short new scenes. But the call for such an examination is indicative of how, in the wrong hands, the adaptation of Spark's brief but complex novel can feel a little overly simplified. Armed with the NT resources, the production was permitted several larger-scale set pieces than PFT could hope for, e.g. an opening which is a tableau of the Last Supper, an image that was irreverent, jocular and prophetic of the play's final portrayal. It subsequently became the authorised version and the one PF presented with far fewer resources but by and large a good deal of success.</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>Richard Baron has marshalled his resources very well in this production. The design is atmospheric where appropriate and simple elsewhere. It lent itself to swift and uncomplicated story-telling. The casting is strong throughout, particularly among the</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			women (I have singled out actors elsewhere) and the evening moved along steadily without undue haste or longeur. The audience reception was testament to his dexterity.
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	The devotional music aside, the use of (I presume recorded) music was unremarkable. With the spoken word – and in particular Brodie’s sweeping pronouncements – so much the centre of the play, the show is not one that requires under-scoring or accompaniment.
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 and sound cues, etc). 	Very good	<p>This has a very striking set design by Ken Harrison which utilises the full height of the space accentuated by imposing columns on either side of the stage. The effect is to suggest both the architecture of an old Edinburgh school as well as the austerity of a religious house.</p> <p>With nuns attire and school uniform predominating, Brodie’s shocking vermilion dress is in stark contrast to the monochrome that dominates the stage for much of the time, a symbol of her apparent abandon and the conservatism of the two institutions. The only time this is varied is in the pastel-lit atelier where Lloyd paints and the water’s edge on Lowther’s estate.</p> <p>With a minimalist design – only the Head’s office is trucked in – it makes Brodie an all pervasive figure.</p>
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <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>	Good	<p>As a Saturday evening show, it was completely full. There was no sense that the play was targeting a particular audience over and above the objectives of the Season’s stated aims. I have been to PFT before and this was a customary audience, made up of locals and tourists. They received the play rapturously.</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
	<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 range, gender mix? • 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 	<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>

Criteria	Comment																
<p>information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²? <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</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>																
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>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.</p>																
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? Was the length appropriate? 	<p>The play started promptly at 8.00 finishing at 10.30 So a full evening's entertainment.</p>																
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <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? 	<p>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.</p>																
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <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 1025 1252 1552"> <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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<p>Customer service</p> <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>																

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.

In response to certain points made in this evaluation, PFT would comment as follows:

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 is confusing directorial invention with playwright-generated text. The Last Supper tableau was an invention of Phyllida Lloyd's for the 1998 NT production; it does not appear in Jay Presson Allen's script. Such a tableau could have been included easily in the PFT production, but that would have been an act of creative plagiarism. The NT production resulted in more significant changes to the text than the advisor claims, as any comparison of the two versions will readily reveal.

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.

