



Scottish Arts Council

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: Lyceum Youth Theatre

Venue: Royal Lyceum Theatre

Title of Event: NT Connections 'DNA'

Type of Event: youth theatre performance

Date of Visit: June 16 2007

Overall Rating: Excellent

High production values, excellent direction and a cast of very talented young actors brings this performance its 'excellent' rating. The play itself was absorbing and dealt with important themes well, but it was too lengthy and lost its way a bit towards the end. Excellent design, and technical standards enhanced further a very good production from LYT.

Name: SYLVIA DOW Date: 23 / 07 / 07

Specialist Advisor
relevant title

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please circle the

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.	excellent	This was a typical LYT production – imaginative set and design, interesting staging and high production values. Visionary, yes, and absolutely up to the usual LYT standard.
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.	excellent	The performance was part of the Edinburgh based performances of the NT Connections Festival for youth theatres. 8 young companies performed at the Lyceum over the course of 4 days of which 6 were Scottish companies, the 2 others coming from Sweden and Ireland. The Festival gives a choice of 10 specially commissioned new plays written for youth theatre groups and they are performed throughout the year in 18 UK venues. The feeling engendered by these shared experiences always creates a good 'buzz' and this evening was no different with all the youth theatre groups turning out to support their fellow thespians from other groups, and giving a really generous response to the performances.
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	excellent	The stated aims are really those of the festival which are stated as being created to: <i>'respond to a widespread demand for challenging new plays for young people to perform. NT Connections commissions 10 new plays every year, penned by some of the hottest talent in world theatre. The plays are then brought to life through hundreds of productions, created by thousands of young actors, technicians, designers and directors, from across the UK, Ireland and further afield.'</i> In this the festival patently succeeds with a series of plays which each year are never less than interesting and challenging for the young performers. That such groups can rise to the challenge was amply demonstrated by the 2 groups I saw on this particular evening.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	excellent	LYT comprises several companies of different ages but the quality of performance here would seem to indicate that the young actors had been with LYT for some time, and they were certainly all from Senior LYT – if not this was an even more remarkable achievement. The acting was of very high standard with all this ensemble company of 11 showing commitment and a strong sense of character and character development. One felt that

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
			the rehearsal process had been very productive and genuinely developmental. This was a challenging and rather dark play which demanded a high degree of engagement and this it got from the company who showed remarkable maturity in their performance skills.
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.	good	<p>This was a challenging play (by Dennis Kelly) with strong themes and a dark heart. It was well written, with a particularly good ear for real sounding teenage dialogue, but it was flawed, first of all in its length – it was at least 20 minutes too long - and secondly in its concluding 15 minutes which seemed out of step with the rest of the play. An editorial eye on it would have improved it immensely.</p> <p>Having said that, it dealt thoughtfully, and dealt with depth and honesty, with its theme of the destructive nature of dark secrets mutually kept, and mutually covered up. It was quite gripping for the most part, but the extended length meant that the impetus of the play, and the extent to which we cared about the outcome or the protagonists was lost to a degree.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	excellent	Absolutely terrific direction (Xana Maclean) – tight, well rehearsed and with a deep understanding of the play, the director used the talents of her young cast to the full, giving each one value. The staging was innovative and always interesting, This was especially important in a very wordy play, but the direction gave the words full value – we were never in doubt as to the play’s theme although the direction was never obvious , sometimes quite abstract in fact.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	good	One of the actors operated an onstage sound system playing hard core dance music – very effective, very appropriate.
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.	excellent	This was an abstract set – contemporary in style, beautifully designed with ramps and levels.
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</p>	excellent	All technical presentation was of the highest standard – atmospheric lighting, well delivered.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>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>		
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>Rating: excellent</p> <p>The play and performance were absolutely appropriate for the performers and the audience, which was a mixture of parents and friends and other youth theatre participants. It was, however, as noted above, just a bit long. The house was about 45% full. Reaction was enthusiastic.</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	Excellent – great to see the young people performing in a professional theatre venue with all the benefits – technical, front of house, and general value – that brings
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There was a pack available which included information about the festival, and about each of the youth theatres performing. This was free of charge.
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.	Some information gleaned from Lyceum website and from that of NT connections. Information available at venue (see above)
Ease of booking and payment	Competent and friendly box office staff.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Lyceum is in a very central location and easy to find – and accessible by many modes of transport. Currently there difficulties connected with the Usher Hall works but signage on the hoardings leads people clearly to the Lyceum.
External signage and signposting	All good.
Internal directional signage	Good.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Signposting of toilets very clear.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Too long by at least 20 minutes but it started on time.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The Lyceum staff are always friendly, knowledgeable and helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Acknowledged on all Lyceum and LYT literature

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.