



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: Royal Lyceum Theatre

Venue: Royal Lyceum Theatre

Title of Event: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)

Performance

Date of Visit: 20th December 2008

Overall Rating: 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.)

This was an entertaining performance with high production values that seemed an appropriately magical offering from the Lyceum for the festive season.

I did feel that the spirit of the novel was slightly lost in this plot-driven adaptation

Name: Rebecca Robinson Date: 22 / 12 / 2008

Specialist Advisor x Scottish Arts Council Officer *Please circle the relevant title*

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.	Good	This engaging adaptation of C S Lewis's novel was a suitably magical festive offering from the Lyceum. The production's high production values made for an entertaining and appealing, family-friendly Christmas show. However, I did feel that the spirit of the novel was slightly lost in this plot –driven adaptation. I also felt that there were certain aspects of the production that prevented my full emotional engagement.
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.	Good	The production was directed by the Lyceum's Artistic Director, Mark Thomson.
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	Competent	In the Director's note Thomson wrote "this story of wonder and of joy, of finding inner strength, of confronting that which scares us and of triumph against the odds". While the story does contain these elements, I felt that this production did not bring them to the fore.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Good	All performances were strong, clear and professional. The 'children' (Peter – Scott Hoatson, Susan – Jenny Hulse, Edmund – Neil Thomas and Lucy – Amy McAllister) captured the essence of the original characters. Meg Fraser created a fierce and distinctive White Witch. I did think the comedy between the Witch and her henchmen (Dwarf – Owain Rhys Davies, Maugrim – Sandy Grierson) sometimes undermined the power of the character. Daniel Williams performed his Aslan with a quiet charisma.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Good	Fight Arranger – Raymond Short The fight scenes worked well – with the stage filled with enough people and action to capture the spirit of battle.

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
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	Adapted by Glyn Robbins Robbins adaptation of the novel clearly conveyed the main narrative elements of the story. However, as mentioned, I did think that some of the spirit of the story was lost.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	Director – Mark Thomson Associate Director, Movement Designer – Malcolm Shields I thought this was a well-cast, clear and entertaining production, which was presented with high production values and professionalism in all aspects. However, there were certain elements of the production and the adaptation that I felt hindered my complete engagement with it. For example, I thought that the character’s detailed – sometimes almost cartoon like – movement served to create distance between the characters and the audience (for e.g. in the way that Mrs Macready’s liking for the Professor was so obviously signalled). I also felt this same sense of distance was further embedded through the use of clipped English voices. Finally, I thought that the comic routines between the White Witch and her two henchmen detracted from the Witch’s power and, therefore, weakened this – very central - element of the production.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	Sound Designer, Composer and Music Director – Philip Pinsky The sound/ music was a central, distinctive and supportive element of the production. The sound/ music helped add to the production’s sense of gravitas and authority. The sound effect for Aslan’s roar was particularly effective. I did, however, feel that the slightly discordant refrain (like a child’s music box) reflected - and perhaps added to – a more general sense of dissonance in the production.
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.	Good	Designer – Ken Harrison Lighting Designer – Davy Cunningham The set was suitably impressive and magical – creating first the impression of the domestic interior dominated by the (perhaps rather too Ikea like) Wardrobe before transforming to the various settings of Narnia. Costumes were all faithful to the original illustrations. The lighting I found sometimes quite dim but basically effective.
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	Good	The production was presented professionally from a technical point of view.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.		
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 auditorium appeared to be nearly full with a, mainly, family audience. Although I noticed that a few people did leave at the interval, the majority of the audience appeared to be attentive throughout and there was warm applause at the end.
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 curriculum (formal or informal)?	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	The Lyceum seemed a suitable venue for the event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There were flyers and posters in the foyer as well as a couple of large displays with production shots. The thick, full-colour glossy programme contained some interesting information related to the production, biographies of the creative team and some games for children.
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.	The production was advertised in all the relevant press and on the Lyceum's website. All information was clear and easy to understand.
Ease of booking and payment	No problem – I booked the tickets online and they were sent to me.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Lyceum is in the centre of Edinburgh and easy to access by public transport.
External signage and signposting	Externally, the venue is clearly signposted.
Internal directional signage	Internally, the auditorium and café/ bar areas are clearly signposted.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Seemed to be ok.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The production started at 7 pm and ran until, approximately, 9.15 pm with one 15 minute interval. The timing seemed very appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Front of house staff seemed friendly and efficient.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The SAC were acknowledged on all publicity material that I was aware of.

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.