



## 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.**

<b>Artist/Company:</b>	<b>NLP Theatre</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Royal Lyceum</b>
<b>Title of Event:</b>	<b>Singin I'm No A Billy he's a Tim</b>
<b>Type of Event:</b>	<b>Theatre</b>
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> May 2009</b>
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<p>This piece of popular theatre explored sectarianism in Scotland and was peopled with immediately recognizable characters, played convincingly throughout. The themes of bigotry and ethnic identity, which it intended to explore, are enormously relevant to contemporary Scotland, but while the script went some way in challenging certain aspects of 'Scotland's Shame' - the sectarian Protestant/ Catholic-Rangers/Celtic stereotypes- other sexual/racial stereotypes seemed, oddly, to go unchallenged. The offhand and casual '<i>darkie/paki/chink/poof</i>' references raised many uncomfortable laughs and though they were perhaps an authentic aspect of the characters unreconstructed attitudes, the lack of challenge to these stereotypes within a play which claims to be tackling bigotry, felt lazy, and served only to undermine the overall effectiveness of the play. Only the presence of the jailer 'Harry' provided 'Billy and Tim' with the jolt of reality required to see beyond at least some of their tired, petty and misinformed sectarian views.</p>	
<b>Name: Stewart Ennis</b>	<b>Date: 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009</b>
<i>Specialist Advisor</i>	

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"> <li>Quality of ideas</li> <li>if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons</li> </ul>	Satisfactory	The idea behind this show is a good one and has drawn support from many individuals and institutions involved in tackling sectarianism. There is no doubt that this is a popular piece of entertainment and it drew an enthusiastic response from the audience. The performers showed a high degree of skill but the production itself was not particularly imaginative and the script, while effectively challenging some aspects of bigotry, seemed to let others slip through the net unchallenged, and thus undermining its message.
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation?</li> <li>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</li> </ul>	Good	This is the third tour of this play, brought back by popular demand. It seems to fit in well with the company's vision of attracting non theatre going audiences into the theatre with popular productions.
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material?</li> <li>How well did it communicate the artistic themes?</li> <li>How did the event originate e.g. from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission?</li> </ul> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for definition</p>	Satisfactory	Artistic director Scott Kyle has stated that he wants to create theatre which will encourage new audiences to come along to theatre, and with this production that certainly seems to be the case. His website reveals (statistics not currently available) that “over <b>70%</b> of the people who came to see our production of ‘Singin` I'm No a Billy He's a Tim' had never been to the theatre before.” In terms of the themes of sectarianism and bigotry, this is an important area of exploration and one in which a popular approach (the show has attracted many Rangers and Celtic football supporters) seems appropriate. However, the challenging of the obvious Celtic/Rangers sectarian stereotypes and prejudices while leaving other occasional off-the-cuff homosexual/racial stereotypes unchallenged, felt like a missed opportunity. e.g. This made the intentionally funny 'poofy boss' routine a little uncomfortable. Indeed apart from their shared empathy towards the jailer Harry, it was often these moments that seemed to provide Billy and Tim with common ground. This had the effect of promoting their sense of <i>togetherness</i> , (i.e. they are both Christian, both Scottish, both apparently heterosexual...‘oor ...country’.) by uniting them against those mutually agreed, lampooned ‘others.’ These views are perhaps those authentic views of the characters and an indication that this play is, perhaps, as much about insecurities in Tim and Billy's Scottish national identities and sexual identities, as it is about their religious sectarianism.

<sup>1</sup> 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
			<p>But the lack of challenge to these other bigotries and stereotypes did serve to undermine the plays effectiveness. In the end however, the presence of the jailer 'Harry' did provide 'Billy and Tim' with the jolt of reality required to see beyond at least some of their tired, petty and misinformed sectarian views.</p>
All	<p><b>Performers/tutors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments.</li> <li>• How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience?</li> <li>• In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop?</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>These were not easy characters to warm to with their standard religious prejudices, casual unchallenged homophobia, racism and sentimental brand of nationalism. But Colin Little and Scot Kyle were convincing throughout; their stereotypical strutting machismo slowly giving way to charm and vulnerability. Indeed their body language, always displayed to threaten and impress, suggested underlying issues of Scottish male sexual insecurity, not overtly explored in this play's text, but always visibly present. James Miller's Harry, whose story put the two rival's squabbles in context, also added warmth and humanity. Indeed it was the dynamics of this relationship, rather than the script, which made the play effective</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p><b>Choreography/Use of choreography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the work original?</li> <li>• How was the space used?</li> <li>• How many dancers were there and how were they used?</li> <li>• How long was the piece?</li> </ul>	N/A	
Theatre	<p><b>Script</b> Please comment on this for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new work</li> <li>• second productions</li> <li>• classics where the original has been substantially changed</li> </ul>	Satisfactory	<p>This was a gag packed script full of the kind of banter expected in football terraces and police cells on the day of an old firm match, and it is clear that the writer knows the territory well. However, it's exploration of sectarianism in particular and the Scottish male psyche in general, at times felt quite clunky, as if every Celtic/Rangers issue, historical and contemporary, had to be squeezed in. Likewise, the material concerning nationalism, resulting in a rendition of <i>Caledonia</i>, felt tacked on and overly sentimental. The exploration of bigotry was occasionally undermined, i.e. by occasional homosexual/racial/religious verbal and sight gags. While this kind of humour and stereotyping is perhaps to be expected from the characters, it seems odd for it to go <i>unchallenged</i> while the obvious Catholic/Protestant sectarianism is very much challenged; especially in a play which seems to be about challenging and exposing bigotry and stereotypes. However, the placing of the jailer's personal predicament at the heart of the piece did, in the end, go some way to effectively highlighting the pettiness and ignorance of Tim and Billy's football squabbles. I gather the script is constantly being added to, to keep it fresh and topical, so perhaps these points will be addressed in future productions</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Theatre, Dance	<b>Direction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the work well interpreted?</li> <li>• Was it well cast?</li> <li>• Was it well presented?</li> </ul>	Satisfactory	<p>The piece was staged in a more or less realistic manner, maintained a good pace throughout, and despite some unsubtle staging, the strong casting of Billy, Tim and the jailer, Harry, felt just right. However there were moments which suggested a lack of continuity in playing style, particularly during songs and gags when there seemed to be an inappropriate playing to the gallery. In the end though, as mentioned above, it was the chemistry and warmth of the performers, and their storytelling abilities rather than any particularly strong theatrical presentation, which allowed the piece to succeed</p>
Dance, Theatre	<b>Use of music</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the music/ sound used enhance the production?</li> <li>• Is it live or recorded?</li> </ul>	Satisfactory	<p>Appropriately enough the play was littered with unaccompanied football chants, sectarian anthems and folk song; and these were all carried off well. The use of Caledonia did appear clichéd and tacked on.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<b>Design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How were the costumes, set and lighting?</li> <li>• How did it work in the venue?</li> <li>• Was it technically proficient? (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc).</li> </ul>	Good	<p>The realistic jail cell set worked well enough though it may have been more effective in smaller more confined space. This is a touring show and considering the venues being played, an adaptable set is an issue.</p>
All	<b>Quality of Public Engagement</b> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the production targeted at a particular audience?</li> <li>• Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants?</li> <li>• Were you/ engaged/inspired?</li> <li>• Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired?</li> <li>• What was their response?</li> <li>• Approximately how many people were there?</li> <li>• Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled?</li> <li>• Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many?</li> <li>• What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event e.g. workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info?</li> <li>• Were these targeted at specific age groups?</li> </ul> <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was it taught/led e.g. one to one, group, child</li> </ul>	Good	<p>NLP have targeted a non theatre going audience, and their own statistics claim that this has indeed been the case (70%) of their audiences have never been to theatre before).</p> <p>There seemed to be a fair number of football supporters in the audience, the night I was there, and the football/cultural references were seldom missed.</p> <p>There were lots of young and older adults in the audience. There did not appear to be much evidence that the audience had been drawn from a particularly broad cultural spectrum.</p> <p>I was not particularly engaged or inspired by this piece, but I realise that I am not the target audience. One or two people did leave at the interval but most of the audience in the 3/4 full auditorium responded enthusiastically and audibly throughout.</p> <p>Technically the production was quite straightforward and seemed to be free from any problems.</p> <p>The company website indicates that there are themed workshops being run in tandem with this production.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>centred?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix?</li> <li>• Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning &amp; Development</li> <li>• What learning/skills development took place?</li> <li>• What was the quality of the art produced by the participants?</li> <li>• Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project?</li> <li>• How were participants recruited?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project?</li> </ul> <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"> <li>• Is it easy to find?</li> <li>• Is it on a main transport route?</li> <li>• Are the spaces clean?</li> <li>• What were the sight lines like?</li> <li>• How big was it?</li> </ul>	<p>Theatre easy to find and on many public transport routes. Space clean and visible from all angles.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event?</li> <li>• Is there information on the venue's website?</li> </ul>	<p>Programmes and posters were available and play scripts were also on sale. The Lyceum, website is informative and easy to negotiate.</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in?</li> <li>• What publicity materials are produced?</li> <li>• Is it easy to understand?</li> <li>• Where can you get the</li> </ul>	<p>SAC acknowledged where appropriate.  Leaflets, posters visible in venue.  The NLP company website is east to negotiate and full of useful information.</p>

Criteria	Comment																
<p>information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding<sup>2</sup>?</li> </ul> <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>																	
Ease of booking and payment	No problems.																
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?</li> <li>Was the length appropriate?</li> </ul>	Start and finish times seemed appropriate for this audience, as was the length.																
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the entrance clearly marked?</li> <li>Is there clear internal directional signage?</li> <li>Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops?</li> </ul>	Entrance clear as internal signage. Was not aware of Braille signage but believe there was sign for audio loop.																
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event</li> </ul> <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue?</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <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>No</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	No	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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BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	No														
Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	Yes														
Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	No														
<p>Customer service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)</li> <li>If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers?</li> </ul>	Staff at box office and bar were helpful and friendly.																

<sup>2</sup> 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.