



## 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: SCDA (Scottish Community Drama Association)**

**Venue: PITLOCHRY FESTIVAL THEATRE**

**Title of Event: SCDA One Act Festival**

**Type of Event: Theatre Performance**

**Date of Visit: 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2010**

**Overall Rating: VERY GOOD**

The three highly contrasting plays performed on this the first of three evenings of the SCDA Festival Finals, were all very well produced and highly entertaining with none of the companies choosing an easy option. Two in particular, Atholl Player's *An Incident by the Border* and Crossmichael Drama Club's *The Lithium Waltz* were of a particularly high standard in terms of quality of performance, direction and design. The event itself was filled with a great sense of camaraderie and though this was a competition, the enthusiasm of the audience was notably non partisan.

**Name: Stewart Ennis (Specialist Advisor) Date: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

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

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"> <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>	Very Good	The three plays that were performed this evening were highly contrasting pieces, including a fable-like piece by Federico Garcia Lorca ( <i>The Love of Don Perlimplin and Belisa In the Garden</i> ); a contemporary absurdist three hander ( <i>An Incident By The Border</i> by Kieron Lyne); and a larger darkly comic ensemble piece ( <i>The Lithium Waltz</i> by Barry McKinley). All three were rich and complex pieces and all were well realised and highly entertaining, with the latter two (which went on to take 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> place in overall final) displaying a particularly high standard in terms of performance, design and direction.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection <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>	Excellent	This was the first evening of the three night finals of the annual SCDA One Act Drama Festival, the winner of which will go on to represent Scotland in the British finals. Community Drama companies from all over Scotland come together to meet and compete in what was an atmosphere of mutual support and non-partisan appreciation. The festival takes place at a different venue each year. This evening at Pitlochry Festival Theatre was very well attended with various other SCDA activities going on during the three night festival.
All	Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance <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> Education events – see <sup>1</sup> below for definition	Excellent	The SCDA has various strings to its bow, including the general support of Community Drama Groups the length and breadth of Scotland, the <i>One Act Drama Festival</i> , the promotion of playwriting through the <i>Play On Words</i> playwriting competition (according to the website SCDA encourages members to produce <i>new work</i> where possible and there is an award at these finals for best original script) and encouraging links with the wider drama community through networking and master classes etc. This was apparent this evening in the level of ambition and in the confidence and skill of participants particularly in the areas of direction, design and performance, suggesting that these community drama companies are far from isolated but rather, are well aware of what is happening in the wider professional world of Scottish theatre.
All	Performers/tutors <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	All of the performers involved in these three plays, are – as far as I am aware – amateur. That said, the general level of performance was high with only one or two lapses in audibility, pace and/or concentration. It should be mentioned that a couple of the actors involved in <i>An Incident at the Border</i> and <i>The Lithium Waltz</i> were particularly impressive displaying the kind of commanding, confident and rounded performances that would have been equally worthy of praise on a professional stage.

<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
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography <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	Script Please comment on this for: <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>	Very Good	All three very contrasting plays have been performed before ( <i>An Incident at the Border</i> was performed last November at Oran Mor) and all were of a high standard. These were rich and complex pieces and offered a major challenge for a community drama company.
Theatre, Dance	Direction <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>	Very Good	Generally the pieces were well directed. <i>The Love of Don Perlimplin and Belisa In the Garden</i> perhaps suffered most from the stop-start scene changes and occasionally unhelpful pacing. The dramatic shooting 'punch-line' of <i>An Incident at the Border</i> did not quite work but this could have been a directorial or technical issue as the blackout /curtain came too quickly for the full impact of what had happened to be completely effective. However casting in this play was spot on with the relationships between the three actors always convincing. <i>The Lithium Waltz</i> was also very well directed with some very good casting. The relentlessly paced set pieces of this play were extremely effective and often hilarious.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the music/ sound used enhance the production?</li> <li>Is it live or recorded?</li> </ul>	Good	<i>The Love of Don Perlimplin and Belisa In the Garden</i> and – in particular – <i>The Lithium Waltz</i> made good use of borrowed music in creating atmosphere and advancing the narrative.
Dance, Theatre	Design <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>	Very Good	Generally the design of all three pieces showed a high level of imagination and expertise. The set for <i>The Love of Don Perlimplin and Belisa In the Garden</i> was abstract and minimal which suited the piece well, and the waiting area of the hospital was well realised in the set of <i>The Lithium Waltz</i> , with a lovely sense of space that allowed the actors to play. The realistic set of <i>An Incident at the Border</i> was extremely impressive and seemed almost to have been tailor made for the Pitlochry main stage, no mean feat considering the company only had about 20 minutes to set it up.
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <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</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>The SCDA one act drama festival is part of the Pitlochry Festival programme (though the Pitlochry brochure and web contain very little information) but seems mainly targeted to members and supporters of the SCDA, and only to a lesser extent to the regular Pitlochry theatregoers. The three productions (all part of three evenings that constitute the SCDA one act drama finals) were highly contrasting but appropriate pieces for this event and together made for a rich and rewarding evenings entertainment.</p> <p>I was almost fully engaged throughout the entire evening, particularly in the case of the latter two plays (which later went on to take 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the finals). The audience were also very much engaged throughout, open to laughing at the</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>how many?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 centred?</li> <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> <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>		<p>frequently funny moments and audibly enthusiastic in their appreciation at the end of each performance, but to their credit, not in any apparently partisan way.</p> <p>The main auditorium appeared to be about 4/5 full, and I would suggest that most of the audience would certainly be late middle aged and over though there were quite a few younger members of the audience as well. The audience did not seem to be particularly diverse in terms of cultural background or disability.</p> <p>There was no indication of BSL/captioned/audio described performances in the SCDA programme, website or the Pitlochry brochure, though I believe that audio description is available on request at Pitlochry Festival Theatre in the case of their own productions. The theatre does have good wheelchair access.</p> <p>The SCDA programme had details of all the plays being performed and the awards to be won. The SCDA also had a stall with information on the SCDA itself. The SCDA website is also full of useful information. All of the SCDA information seemed to be particularly aimed at members or those already familiar with the SCDA, but it is also full of encouraging statements for others to get involved and details of how to do so.</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>Pitlochry Festival Theatre is within easy walking distance from town centre. The space was spotlessly clean and ideally suited to this event. There were no sight line issues and the auditorium was at least 4/5 full.</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>There were SCDA programmes and other SCDA material on display. There is a lot of information on the SCDA website but limited info on this event in the Pitlochry brochure and website.</p>

Criteria	Comment																
<p><b>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</b></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 information?</li> <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>	<p>There was information on the SCDA website, which was useful and easy to understand. The Pitlochry Theatre website had minimal information and was not particularly useful.</p> <p>SAC acknowledged where appropriate.</p>																
<p><b>Ease of booking and payment</b></p>	<p>Booking by phone was not a problem.</p>																
<p><b>Timing of the event</b></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>	<p>The start (7pm) and finishing time (10.00pm) seemed appropriate to this event, as was the overall running time given there were three plays.</p>																
<p><b>Signage and signposting</b></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>	<p>External and internal signage seemed to be okay. I was not aware of Braille signage but audio loops are available.</p>																
<p><b>Access and provision for disabled people</b></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" data-bbox="571 1081 1252 1603"> <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
	Yes/No		Yes/No														
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Accessible toilets	YES	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	NO														
<p><b>Customer service</b></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>	<p>Box office and catering staff were very friendly and helpful.</p>																

<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.