



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

**Organisation/Venue:** Scottish Community Drama Association/Perth Theatre  
**Title of Event:** British Finals (festival of one act plays from the UK)  
**Type of Event:** (e.g. performance, work-in-progress, open rehearsal etc.) **performance**  
**Date of Visit:** Friday 30 June 2006

**Overall Rating** (Please rate the production 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.)

**Competent**

The annual festival 'British Finals' is the major opportunity for amateur dramatic groups in the UK to see each other's work and exchange, compare and develop production and performance skills, recruit new participants and audiences for their work. This seems to be a very successful annual event and a great celebration of making theatre for and by a whole body of non-professionals.

Overall, (from the one evening of the festival the writer experienced), the event achieves a competent standard of work, and in particular, the performance standard is good. There is obviously a great wealth of amateur talent which performs to audiences throughout the country on a regular basis. (I wonder if there is information available about the cross-over between those attending local 'am-dram' shows and professionally produced shows?)

There would appear to be scope for SCDA to develop links with theatre professionals, eg having guest adjudicators, hosting master-classes, sourcing scripts, and so on.

**Name:** Phyllis Steel

**Date:** 20 / 07 / 2006

**Advisor**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

*Please tick the relevant title*

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named below. 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 may be made available to Scottish Arts Council Officers, Council and Committee members, and specialist advisors as appropriate. It will 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 Council to report on the overall performance of its Core 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 attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.

**Competent** – routine rather than especially interesting.

**Good** – well conceived and executed

**Excellent** – conceived and executed to a high standard.

## 1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, taking account of the following:

1.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
1.1	Vision and imagination	Good	The British Finals bring together the winning productions of One Act plays of the four national finals in Wales, Scotland, England and Ireland. The festival this year was hosted by the Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA) and was held at Perth Theatre over two evenings. The writer attended the first evening only.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Competent	Productions: Shakers Re-stirred (Godber & Thornton) Performed by Kirkintilloch Players (Scotland) Me & My Friend (Act 1) (Plowman) Performed by St. Ursula Players (Bristol, England)  Both productions were audible and communicated their stories competently.

## 2. Strengths and Weaknesses

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with reference to the following:

2.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
2.1	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions	Competent	John Godber/Jane Thornton – Shakers Re-stirred This is a well structured piece, with witty one-liners, quick change of roles and situations. However, the four female characters were quite superficial and there was no development of them or their relationships with each other. In general, this is a somewhat negative and superficial portrayal of young people - 'the lads' and 'ladettes'.  In my opinion, this was a disappointing choice of script.
		Good	Gillian Plowman – My and My Friend (Act 1) This Act 1 of a full-length play stood well on its own. It is a black comedy whose two characters form a real 'odd couple' with their idiosyncratic mannerisms and obsessions. The piece is almost ' <i>Beckettesque</i> ' in mood and setting. The two male characters have recently been released from a local psychiatric unit and are being rehabilitated in a council flat.  In my view, this was both a challenging and sympathetic piece of writing.

2.2	Direction	Competent	Shakers Re-stirred – directed by Rosina Robinson The script demanded quick reactions, sharp blocking and movement as the characters change and interweave, creating new situations, roles and dialogue. The piece was well ‘choreographed’ and all directorial aspects were competently achieved.
		Competent	Me and My Friend (Act 1) – directed by Marie O’Sullivan Overall, this was a sympathetic interpretation of the script. The characters were engaging and gave a good insight into people who have poor mental health. Their individual obsessive routines were well judged. The pace was good; and both the idiosyncratic humour and the more tragic scenes were well directed.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Good	All the performers in the festival are amateur.  Shakers Re-stirred All four young female performers gave strong, confident performances as long-suffering waitresses who are rushed off their feet dealing with ‘yuppies’, ‘lads’ and ‘ladettes’. They worked well as an ensemble and together they neatly created imaginary scenes in bars, nightclubs, shops, football games, and so on.
		Good	Me and My Friend (Act 1) The two characters were believable as recent inmates of a psychiatric hospital. They performed well as people in a state of flux – mental and environmental - acting out their obsessive rituals and routines in an attempt to make sense of their new situation.
2.4	Use of Music <sup>1</sup>		N/A
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography		N/A
2.6	Design <sup>2</sup> – including set, costume and lighting design	Competent	Shakers Re-stirred Simple and effective - chairs, tables, a single bar on poles. The simple set enabled the performers to move freely and easily from one imaginary location to another. Costumes were waitress uniforms.

<sup>1</sup> In particular, please comment on the quality and appropriateness of any original music composed for the production. Please indicate whether the music was performed live or recorded, in whole or in parts, and what effect this has on the quality of the production.

<sup>2</sup> Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule

		Competent	Me and My Friend (Act 1) The set was an acceptable representation of a council flat lived in by two men – suitably messy, clothing draped over bits of furniture which in themselves were odd and mismatched, a bit bare, and obviously put together for use as temporary accommodation.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Competent	All production and technical aspects were well presented.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction		The theatre was 100% capacity. In the main, the audience was 45+, and comprised of members of SCDA and visitors from the competing countries. Both productions were very well received. Highly animated conversation at the interval about Shakers Re-stirred. Very good positive responses all round at the end of both performances.

### 3. 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.*

3.	Criteria	Comments
3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	The venue was well suited for the style of the two shows I attended.
3.2	Information/interpretive material at venue <sup>3</sup>	The programme was very informative about the aim and nature of the festival. It gave details about the adjudicator and about the different participating amateur dramatic groups, but not about their choice of play, content, vision and so on.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>4</sup>	I only knew about the festival via my role as a SAC Specialist Advisor.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Confused. Operator answered by saying 'Horsecross' so I dialled again and then realised this was the booking system for Perth Theatre. As a first-time visitor to the venue, I was not asked if I knew how to get there, or if I wanted to be added to their mailing list, or did I need any other information or help for my visit. They were unsure of running times (I needed to get a train no later than 10.25pm) and they did not get back to me about this as requested.

<sup>3</sup> These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

<sup>4</sup> Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the range, content, and when and where available. Be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised, commenting on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information

3.5	External signage and signposting	I got a taxi from the station to the theatre, and was only aware of signage in close proximity to the theatre. I was not aware of directional signs to the theatre from the railway station.
3.6	Internal directional signage	This was adequate.
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	<p>The theatre had adapted internal wheelchair ramps to access bar and café. There was a clearly signed access toilet. Wheelchair users were placed in the front row. From where I was sitting at the rear of the back stalls this looked a bit cramped.</p> <p>The festival organisers did not promote (via the programme) any other access facilities, such as signed performances, or use of induction loop for people with hearing impairments, or interpretation tapes for people with visual impairments.</p> <p>The inclusion of BSL interpretation and audio interpretation tapes at all four performances should be actively encouraged for future events.</p>
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The festival started at 7.30pm. Unfortunately, the comments from the adjudicator came at the end which was too late for me to attend – I think the event finished around 10.40pm. For a festival this seemed appropriate – two performances and immediate feedback from the adjudicator and still time to socialise!
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	<p>Box Office – see above 3.4</p> <p>There was a great festive spirit in and around the foyer and box office. Staff and SCDA volunteers were in costume either selling festival programmes or raffle tickets for their funds.</p> <p>The bar/catering staff were very pleasant, but they had run out of mineral water and ice. Poor pre-planning given pre-bookings and the run of good weather.</p>
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding <sup>5</sup>	SAC logo appears in the rear of the programme with other supporters. However, there was no mention of SAC support in the welcoming speech nor could I see/find the SAC logo on the SCDA website.

<sup>5</sup> The following is an extract from the Scottish Arts Council's conditions of grant for funded organisations:

“The company should acknowledge Scottish Arts Council funding in press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising). Acknowledgement of the Scottish Arts Council grant must also be made in any secondary or indirect products arising from the revenue funding such as recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.”

Please comment on whether these conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.