



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: Scottish Community Drama Festival**

**Venue:** Greenock Arts Guild

**Title of Event:** One-Act Play Festival 2007

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

**Date of Visit:** Day one of festival 26<sup>th</sup> April 2007

**Overall Rating** (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.)

Good – The event is successfully aimed at the participants in the competition and their followers, who on a Thursday night over half filled the auditorium for the first night of three. While the general public are not excluded from the festival there does not appear to be great attempts to encourage their attendance. The evening was smoothly run with three contrasting short plays followed by an entertaining adjudication (reminding me of a local paper review but having it performed on stage minutes following seeing the pieces.)

Name: \_\_Sandy Maxwell\_\_ Date: \_08/May/2007\_

Specialist 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 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	The festival is a celebration of the work from the 200 or so member clubs of the SCDA. Many of them compete in regional one act play competitions towards this as the Scottish Final and then on to British Final. In this festival final 9 clubs competed over 3 days by performing in front of an audience & invited adjudicator. The one act plays chosen were all within the capabilities of the companies and demonstrated well their skills and the strength & enthusiasm of community drama clubs in Scotland.
All	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.	Can't comment	As I did not see any of the previous rounds I can not comment on how the final fits into the festival. As part of the programming of Greenock Arts Guild, while it appeared in their seasonal programme and tickets were sold through their box office the impression from their programme, website and on the night was that this was a "hire" and not really integrated into their public programme. There are several events around the programme of plays for member clubs such as socials & talks but as I did not attend them I cannot comment beyond saying that their presence was well marketed to the audience which appeared to be largely drawn from member clubs.
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 <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	good	The evening I was present the three plays were presented to time and the evening including the final speech & adjudication flowed well as a competitive event and demonstrated a range of styles
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.  Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	competent	The three competitors I saw were Tryst Theatre Company (Falkirk), Stewarton Drama Group & Wick players (who subsequently went on to win the Festival.) While some of the performances (particularly the two leads in Wick & one of the Tryst players) were good the general standard was competent with none falling below that and none outstanding.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/A	Not largely applicable as all plays had to conform to a proscenium arch presentation with minimal set & limited entrances.

<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
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	good	Pugalist Specialist by Adriano Shaplin was set in modern day US military Iraq. Language within both the setting of a briefing & subsequent mission never quite captured US military speak and as a play worked least well of the three. A Bench at the Edge by Luigi Jannuzzi appears to be a popular piece for one-act play competitions as a surreal black comedy set on the border between life & death, the play was played largely an absurdist two hander. The Pushcart Peddlers by Murray Schisgal is a traditional light comedy making it easy to put the Jewish humour across to the audience.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	competent	As short one-act plays the developing of any plot or characters was difficult to establish. As I am unaware of any of the plays or authors I can't comment much about the success of their interpretation.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	competent	None of the plays made much use of music and minimal use of recorded sound effects. The Pushcart Peddlers used Scott Joplin as intro music to effectively set the date & location of the play.
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	Due to fast turn around all the sets were simple. For the first a camouflage net as a back drop with glimpses of a VDU & other equipment behind it was very effective, the second was on a bare stage with white Cyc and the last suggested a New York pier with a small painted backdrop and dressing of barrels ropes etc.
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 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>	good	Technical presentation was simple but good throughout with no obvious mistakes.
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/</p>		Several hundred people in both stalls & balcony at around 50% capacity for the venue. As a very traditional proscenium arch stage it was very appropriate for the festival although the auditorium & front of house is definitely showing it's age and is well due for the planned refurbishment. It does however seem to be a popular "home" to the SCDA festival finals.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc		
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.	competent	I didn't attend any of the side events as they were all on the Friday & Saturday of the festival. There was a programme on sale (£3) for the festival which exemplified the focus of the event on the performers rather than the plays. It included the usual introductions, background to SCDA festival, previous winners, descriptions of the participating clubs, cast lists but nothing about the authors or the plays themselves beyond the titles. There were several wall displays on the work of the SCDA & pictures of previous festival winners.
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	Well suited to the nature of the festival, participants appeared "at home" with it despite it's aging décor and limiting FOH areas.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The appeal for the refurbishment fronted by Richard Wilson is very prominent throughout the building. SCDA had tables in the foyer to sell raffle tickets, programmes & prize draws enhancing the community feel to the event. There was nothing displayed about the companies or plays on that or subsequent nights.
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.	SCDA website is clear to navigate & informative with full details of programme (again prioritising the performing company & only listing play title & author). The Greenock Arts Guild spring/summer brochure & website listed the event with minimal details (including incorrect start time) more as an advert than as a programme entry. I assume that the majority of publicity was through the SCDA & its members, as I do not live in Greenock I was not aware of what local publicity there was.
Ease of booking and payment	Ticket bought by credit card over phone very easily, box office had not been made aware of estimated running time by SCDA several days before the visit but the incorrect start time was highlighted. Ticket was presented at box office in SCDA wallet with accompanying information.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Arriving with not a lot of time due to road works I toured Greenock centre crossing paths with another couple of people also looking for the Guild which could do with more signposting although locals stopped in the street could all point it out. The Web site does have excellent directions including a streetmap map
External signage and signposting	Once in Campbell Street the building is very prominent.
Internal directional signage	Rooms & layout well signposted
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Wheelchair access is by a side entrance and would not appear to include all rooms and the balcony of the theatre. Layout within the building FOH area is visually cluttered & with several steps, I assume that this will be extensively revised as part of the refurbishment.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	7pm start necessary with three plays & adjudication to fit in, there was some coming & going of audiences for the various plays which I assumed was due to supporters for specific companies.

Criteria	Comment
	Evening was not too long.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	FOH was a mixture of GAG & SCDA people which left the area rather crowded but plenty of people to assist & theatre ushering was very efficient
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	SAC well acknowledged on cover of programme & throughout website. Role of SAC lottery praised in GAG brochure & website.

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<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.