



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 Association

Venue: Plockton High School, Plockton, South-West Ross.

Title of Event: The Scottish Youth One-Act Play Final Festival

Type of Event: (*e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc*) This event sees the youth community drama groups from North, West, East and Highland regions of Scotland compete in the national final. Each of the four groups perform their chosen one act play in front of an audience and adjudicator Gerry Ramage. Each group receives feedback at the end of the evening and the winning group is presented with the 'Quidi Vidi' trophy.

Date of Visit: 23rd June 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.)

4 – Good.

SCDA should be commended on their selection of community youth groups. It was clear why these groups were in the final. All performances were of a very high standard. The children enjoyed the experience as well as the audience who were clearly engaged throughout the event. This event was an important opportunity to showcase the talents of youth community drama groups and I feel there is a place for it in the future.

It was too difficult to make comparisons and to judge very young groups against groups in their late teens – it might be a consideration for SCDA to develop 2 levels of age ranges in the future.

The event was let down by both the venue and organisation. Plockton, albeit stunningly beautiful, was geographically isolated and difficult for many of the groups and supporters to get to. The school hall was unsympathetic to disabled access/provision. Generally there was a lack of signage identifying the venue, event and date. Organisation although welcoming and friendly was somewhat casual and I felt that these groups deserved a more slickly polished and professional sense of the occasion.

The adjudicator, Gerry Ramage, spoke at length to the audience and the groups and gave some very good feedback, advice and praise. I felt, especially for parents present, that some of the feedback could have been given to the groups individually, and in private.

I have to say I was surprised with the choice of winner as this in my view, although the most impeccably rehearsed production was certainly the most dated piece of theatre presented.

To summarise, a very worthwhile experience for all involved but the event management could have been improved.

Name: Lindsay Thorburn

Date: 25th/06/2007

Specialist Advisor

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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.	5 – excellent	<p>There were four finalist drama groups, each performing a one-act play. All four plays contrasted in style and imagination and were executed to a very high standard.</p> <p>At the end of the event the Quidi Vidi Trophy was presented to the Carnoustie Theatre Club (youth division).</p>
All	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <p>Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	4 – good	<p>This was the Scottish <u>Youth Final</u> division of the Scottish Community Drama Association annual festival. There is also an adult division.</p> <p>I believe the standard of the four finalist groups was absolutely excellent and as a consequence the decision of selecting an overall winner was very challenging.</p> <p>The first 2 groups 'Take3 Youth Theatre (Dunfermline)' and 'Carnoustie Theatre Club' had age ranges of approximately 6 years – 15 years whereas the second two groups 'Out of Eden Drama Group – Thurso High School' and 'Kirkcubright Academy Drama Club' consisted of 5th and 6th year pupils of approximate ages 16 – 18 years old.</p> <p>In my view it is a very difficult task to compare youth groups where the bulk of the members are under 15 years old with groups composing of 5th and 6th year pupils. SCDA may choose to consider having two levels for this competition – one for younger youth groups and one for older youth groups (perhaps late teens).</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see ¹below for guidance</p>	2 – poor	<p>The aim of this particular event was <u>not</u> clearly stated in the programme or website. <u>A description</u> of the event can be located on the SCDA website. In future this should be explicitly stated on programme as well as on the web.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the event successfully showcased high quality youth community drama and was adjudicated and critiqued by an experienced industry professional.</p>

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
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	5 – excellent	<p>The actors were all in the youth category and are not professionally trained.</p> <p>The standard of performance from all four groups was particularly high. Clearly all groups were extremely well rehearsed and appeared to be enjoying the experience. Each play engaged the audience for different reasons. The audience was responsive, without prejudice, to each piece of work and welcomed and congratulated many tender and funny moments within each performance.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/A	<p>Choreography was not a prerequisite for this event therefore I have not awarded it a rating.</p> <p>Out of Eden Drama Group (Highland Division) – Thurso High School presented ‘Crush’ devised by the group. This piece was approached in an individual and innovative way and included some ensemble choreographed sequences, which were very effective.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	5 – excellent	<p>Take3 Youth Theatre – Dunfermline (Eastern Division) presented ‘Ghost Writer’ by N.J. Warburton – This was a comedy-satire exploring the elements involved in writing and performing a play including the importance of plot, audience and structure. A clever choice in terms of educating the group and audience. Accessible to the audience although perhaps slightly complex for some of the younger children to grasp.</p> <p>Carnoustie Theatre Group Youth (Northern Division) presented ‘We’ll Be Home Tomorrow’ by Wayne Denfhy. A comic drama tracking the summer holiday of a family. Described by the adjudicator as ‘coming off the page better than it was on the page’, I found this play to be slightly dated/over familiar – it reminded me at times of slightly melodramatic Saturday children TV ‘The Chuckle Brothers’ or something of that ilk. There were some very funny moments. This was an accessible choice.</p> <p>Out of Eden Drama Group (Highland Division) – Thurso High School presented ‘Crush’ devised by the group. This was an innovative and clever presentation. Aptly named ‘Crush’ tracks the infatuation of a girl with the school hunk who dates her, drugs her and the suggestion is, rapes her. This piece was created in collaboration with the local Community Police Officer and Guidance Teachers as peer education. The script was relatively sparse with a lot of movement and music to create strong visual imagery without over complication. The overall impact was a sensitive and unique approach to issue based theatre.</p> <p>Kirkcudbright Academy Drama Club (Western</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>Division) presented 'One and All' by Alan Haenel. 'One and All' is a slick American comedy exploring the trials and tribulations of going on a first date with a 'popular girl' from school. The play delves into the psyche of a young boy looking for love with characters playing different aspects of his personality including 'Horny'!</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	5 – excellent	<p>Take3 Youth Theatre – Dunfermline (Eastern Division) presented 'Ghost Writer' by N.J. Warburton. Well dressed. Very well cast with the widest variety of ages. Several of the actors performed a variety of accents to a good standard. Well-blocked and comedic but at times the pace could have been picked up. More thought could have been given to the set.</p> <p>Carnoustie Theatre Group Youth (Northern Division) presented 'We'll Be Home Tomorrow' by Wayne Denfhy. Visually exciting and very colourful with use of ensemble work. So well rehearsed, this play was word and action perfect. The focus seemed to be more on imagery than it was on the acting. I felt that this style of direction was a tad dated and was surprised it won the final. It wasn't innovative or contemporary but it was very highly polished and produced.</p> <p>Out of Eden Drama Group (Highland Division) – Thurso High School presented 'Crush' devised by the group. I am unclear if the director was a school student, teacher or someone independent. 'Crush' was a thoughtful, hard-hitting yet subtle, poignant expose on how some people aren't what they seem and the dangers of date rape. As a piece of theatre in education there is a risk with this sort of thing that it could be considered patronising but 'Crush' was delivered with a great deal of sensitivity. The mostly female cast were in all in white, which was striking in much of the ensemble work. A lot of music was used - much of which was fitting but I felt at times it was too much.</p> <p>Kirkcudbright Academy Drama Club (Western Division) presented 'One and All' by Alan Haenel. It is an amazing achievement that this was the directorial debut of a 6th year pupil. This play became more dynamic as the actors gradually relaxed into their characters. The space was used well and blocking for the most part was very good. Each performance was bursting with energy, which was a tough call as this was the last group to go on.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	N/A	<p>Music was not a prerequisite for this event therefore I have not awarded it a rating.</p> <p>Out of Eden Drama Group (Highland Division) – Thurso High School presented 'Crush' devised by the group. Generally the choice of tracks was clever</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			and appropriate. At times there did seem more emphasis on the music than there was on the performance. Less is sometimes more!
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.	3 – competent	<p>In terms of set and lighting there was a quick turnaround not a sufficient variety of lights to use. There was also a considerable distance to travel for most groups so this may have had an impact on what they could bring.</p> <p>Take3 Youth Theatre – Dunfermline (Eastern Division) presented ‘Ghost Writer’ by N.J. Warburton. Set design could have been improved. It was simple and practical. Costume and lighting were appropriate.</p> <p>Carnoustie Theatre Group Youth (Northern Division) presented ‘We’ll Be Home Tomorrow’ by Wayne Denfhy. Visually exciting set and costumes in bright, bold colours. At first it was concern that the set may take over the stage however the cast navigated their way round the set competently. Lighting was appropriate.</p> <p>Out of Eden Drama Group (Highland Division) – Thurso High School presented ‘Crush’ devised by the group. Minimal set was used for this piece - it wasn’t necessary. The ensemble female cast were dressed in long white skirts and tops symbolising innocence and purity The character who was raped later had the addition on a red band around her wrist. This was striking. This group made most use of lighting.</p> <p>Kirkcudbright Academy Drama Club (Western Division) presented ‘One and All’ by Alan Haenel. One all used a minimal set. It was well costumed and the clever use of lights in the ‘rewind’ scenes should be commended.</p>
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>	4 – good	All four pieces were executed to a high standard. I do feel if the venue was more centrally located some groups may have been in a better position to transport set. A professional theatre would have allowed more flexibility and creativity with lighting.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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>	XXX	<p>The hall was filled to 100% capacity (approx 200 people) and consisted mainly of supporters/ parents of each community group. There were also some locals at the event. It was a good audience; they appeared fully engaged throughout – despite it being a long night. The atmosphere was supportive and everyone appeared to be enjoying themselves.</p> <p>Sightlines for the audience were an issue. All seating was on the one level and several rows deep. I was in the third row and even there I had trouble seeing round the person who was sitting directly in front of me. Seating could have been improved.</p>
All	<p>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.</p>		N/A
All	<p>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)?</p>		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	<p>I didn't feel the venue was suitable. The school hall while adequate in many respects was very tired. It is very important to be as inclusive as possible and to ensure that barriers are removed which would inhibit the wider community from sharing this experience, however, these youth groups are used to performing in school and village halls and I feel that for the 'final' it is important to impose a sense of pride and professionalism, not parochialism. The approach of the staff was friendly but seemed to be more suited to that of a country fete than a national final. The raffle (prizes including a cuddly seal soft toy and a mug) seemed inappropriate and unnecessary and it wasn't clear what the money was being raised for.</p> <p>I do appreciate that arts events should not be unique to big cities and it is both essential and important to foster the arts in rural settings but at National Competition Final, the choice of venue should offer the competitors a sense of professional value and aspiration.</p>
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	<p>The only material I could find was the programme, which cost 50p. The programme was informative but should state the aims of the event. I felt the programme albeit reasonably informative, looked a bit shabby. To instil a sense of pride these things are important and I feel should be produced to a higher standard. There was no other obvious informative material.</p>
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.	<p>The only publicity I could find was on the SCDA website. This is the first website that comes up when you type in 'Scottish Community Drama' to Google.</p> <p>The website needs updated, modernised and should be more explicit about SCDA's aims.</p>
Ease of booking and payment	<p>There was no answer the first time I called to book tickets. The following day a pleasant lady phoned back to confirm that she would leave my ticket at the box office. When I got to the box office there was no ticket for me.</p>
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	<p>Plockton is geographically isolated on the north west of Scotland with many windy single-track roads to get there. The village as a location is a beautiful one attracting many tourists. The area is also known for the arts with the "National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music" based at the High School.</p> <p>The school was relatively easy to find as it left as</p>

Criteria	Comment
	you enter the village. The school is next to the train station – the main transport route.
External signage and signposting	Non-existent. The only clue that something was going on was the piper who was playing at the doors of the school.
Internal directional signage	Non existent
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Poor. There were no visible signs of disabled access. Both entrances to the school hall involve walking up steps – there were no ramps. Inside the internal doors were very heavy and no visible disabled toilets. There was no clear provision for audience members with auditory or visual impairments.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	I feel the event was too long. It started at six and finished at half ten. Most of the audience had travelled hundreds of miles to get there and many people (including myself) did not have time to have a proper dinner due to the early start of the show.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	<p>The staff were very friendly but not hugely efficient. On entering the building, the first table I turned to [which appeared to be the box office] turned out to be the table for selling raffle tickets! The box office was round the corner with no signage. I would recommend that the box office should be instantly recognisable on entering.</p> <p>The lady who I spoke to on the phone who took my name and said she would leave my ticket at the box office for me failed to do so. Fortunately there were still a few tickets available. On paying, another assistant said 'you should have said you were a student – you would have got in for half price'. As much as this was a friendly offer, it is hardly professional. When we got into the hall a boy selling programmes was blocking the entrance and holding up proceedings. No one showed us to our seats.</p>
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	It is acknowledged on the website, programme and during the prize giving ceremony at the end.

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.