



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 Dance Theatre
Venue:	Zoo Southside Venue, Edinburgh Festival Fringe
Title of Event:	Scottish Dance Theatre
Type of Event:	performance
Date of Visit:	13 th August 2008
Overall Rating:	5 - Excellent

Scottish Dance Theatre presented a double bill of innovative dance of the highest quality during this run at the Fringe. The two works performed, *Tenderhook* (choreographed by Liv Lorent) and *DOG* (choreographed by Hofesh Shecter) enabled the company to fully demonstrate the versatility of the dancers and the breadth of vision directing the repertoire.

The Fringe is notorious in the challenges it presents for artists, from re-claimed venues and technical limitations, to the overwhelming competition for audiences. The performance I attended demonstrated SDT rising admirably to both these challenges with high quality presentation and a near capacity audience who were rapturous in their response.

Name: Anita Clark Date: 11 September 2008

Scottish Arts Council Officer

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	This double bill exemplifies the breadth of vision at the heart of SDT. The programme demonstrates the careful consideration that Janet Smith (Artistic Director) brings to the choice of choreographers and the creative partnership that is struck between the company and the guest choreographers. This is a delicious double bill which showcased the adventurous and original artistic approach which has come to epitomise SDT.
All (if relevant)	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.	5	SDT has managed to establish a strong presence at the Edinburgh Festival fringe in recent years, despite only undertaking a short run during the four week extravaganza. This year the company extended not only the length of the run, but also the programme presented, rather than the single pieces performed in recent years. SDT brought an exceptional programme of dance to the Fringe programme.
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 ¹ below for guidance	5	The introduction printed programme included a personal introduction from Janet which set out SDT's approach: <i>'...SDT regularly commissions, creates and tours original work by a diverse range of innovative choreographers.... Our dancers have been wonderfully challenged by the contrasting styles, approaches and ideas of these very distinctive dance makers and I trust you and in for an enriching and entertaining experience.'</i> This was an appropriate introduction for the programme presented by the company which succeed in providing audiences with an enriching and entertaining experience.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	5	The quality of the dancers and the strong sense of a collective company identity is central to Scottish Dance Theatre's achievements. The dancers are all versatile artists with strong technical abilities and generous performance quality which engages with the audience.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	5	<i>Tenderhook</i> , choreographed by Liv Lorent is a distinctive and romantic piece. The use of different ribbons which the dancers swirl around their bodies and at points become entwined in, along with teetering pointe work, create images of acrobats. The work builds with leaps and twirls which seem effortless and free. The deep emotion of the piece comes through the duet work with struggles

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
			<p>between supporting and restricting; enabling and constraining.</p> <p>Hofesh Shechter's <i>DOG</i>, utilised a very different movement vocabulary; grounded and earthy with pulsing rhythmic energy. There are hints throughout the piece of themes of evolution from the animalistic movements to the text about dolphins which opens the work. The drive throughout the work is survival which is explored with humour and joy.</p>
Theatre	<p>Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.</p>	-	N/A
Theatre, Dance	<p>Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.</p>	5	<p>SDT's approach is to commission choreographers who work creatively with the dancers on the creation of the work. This ensures that the performers have a strong connection with the choreography.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.</p>	4	<p>Recorded, original music/ soundtracks were used for both pieces presented. The sound quality was good and at an appropriate level for the venue. <i>Tenderhook</i> utilised a commissioned score from Ezio Bosso which embodied the fragile strength of the choreography. In <i>DOG</i>, Shechter turned his hand to the music as well as the choreography as he has done in other work, ensuring that the movement grows out of the sound score. The strong connection between the music and choreography was strong in both pieces of work.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.</p>	4	<p>The production values of both works was good, with distinctive and atmospheric lighting, costuming and swirling ribbons in <i>Tenderhooks</i>. The venue will have provided more limited lighting options that SDT would usually have within their home venue, however the technical resources were fully exploited ensuring a far higher technical representation than is usually found on the Fringe.</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	<p>The temporary nature of the fringe venue obviously meant that some compromises had to be made technically, particularly in terms of the lighting. However, what was achieved was fantastic and ensured the work achieved good production standards.</p>

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>		<p>There was a full house for the performance I attended (approximately 150-200) and a fabulous response to the work. At the end of the performance there was extended applause and cheering, with some standing ovations.</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	A characteristic of the Fringe is the re-claiming of a multitude of spaces and their transformation into a performance venue. There is no getting away from the temporary and make-shift nature of the Zoo Southside as a theatre, but it does provide a good venue for dance and SDT with the size of stage and audience capacity compared to other venues.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A simple photocopied programme sheet was available which included some insight from the two choreographers into their pieces. It was straight forward but provided the audience with something to take away and absorb as they digested the performance. Press cuttings and reviews were prominent at the venue.
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.	Publicity and marketing is just in a completely different realm when it comes to the Fringe. SDT had an advert in the Fringe brochure which gave more prominence to their performances and I was aware of good press reviews, which is always important in achieving awareness during the festival.
Ease of booking and payment	My tickets for this performance were part of a party booking. There was significant issues with Fringe's box office in the lead up to and during this years festival which may have impacted on the venue and company.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Venue is in the city with public transport links.
External signage and signposting	Prominent external signage of the building's use as a Fringe venue.
Internal directional signage	Adequate given that it is a Fringe venue.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Some access for wheel chair users but not prominently sign-posted.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance was at 6.30pm and lasted just over the hour with a short interval. This was great for the Fringe both in terms of timing and length.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Again adequate given that it is the Fringe and there seemed to be an attitude of helpfulness at the venue which was welcome.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Scottish Arts Council credit on publicity and programme.

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.

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.