



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: Scottish Dance Theatre
Venue: Zoo Southside; Edinburgh Festival Fringe
Title of Event : A Visitation
Type of Event: Performance
Date of Visit: 25 August 2009
Overall Rating: Very Good

Scottish Dance Theatre's approach to the fringe in 2009 was to present two contrasting pieces of work - *A Visitation* (chr. Ina Christel Johannessen) and *Luxuria* (chr. Liv Lorent) – on different days during a two week run.

A Visitation is a distinctive dance theatre piece, hauntingly emotive and with strong individual and collective performances from the company dancers. It presents a vivid concept with strong cohesion across the choreography, direction, music and design. Five mannequins are skilfully manipulated within the work confusing our sense of what is real.

A Visitation was engaging, enthusiastically received by the audience with only a few empty seats as the performance I attended..

Name: Anita Clark

Date: 28 September 2009

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 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

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	<p>Vision and imagination of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of ideas if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons 	Very good	<p><i>A Visitation</i> was created with Scottish Dance Theatre by Norwegian choreographer, Ina Christel Johannessen and premiered in February 2009. It is a dramatic piece of dance theatre with strong design and a vivid concept. It draws on images of ghostly characters, an eerie séance and the Victorian period in design and costume. Five mannequins are skilfully manipulated within the work confusing our sense of what is real.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	Good	<p>Scottish Dance Theatre's approach to the Fringe in 2009 was to present two contrasting pieces of work - <i>A Visitation</i> and <i>Luxuria</i> (Chr. Liv Lorent) – on different days during a two week run. It would be interesting to know what percentage of audiences came to see both of the pieces.</p> <p><i>A Visitation</i> is a strong addition to the company's rep, drawing on the dancer's dramatic skills.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? How well did it communicate the artistic themes? How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹ below for definition</p>	Very Good	<p>In her introduction in the programme, Artistic Director Janet Smith says that Scottish Dance Theatre aims to '<i>develop a distinctive performance style that draws from the individual and personal and our shared desire to tell stories.</i>'</p> <p><i>A Visitation</i> succeeds in this as a distinctive dance theatre piece, hauntingly emotive and with strong individual and collective performances from the company dancers.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments. How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience? In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop? 	Good	<p>The work demands dramatic performance skills alongside strong technique from the dancers and all delivered on this. Naomi Murray gave an exceptional performance as the bride character, embodying qualities of distress and solitude in her movement.</p> <p>There have been some changes within the company in recent months and the sense of unity wasn't as strong as it usually is, but will only come through working together more.</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
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work original? • How was the space used? • How many dancers were there and how were they used? • How long was the piece? 	Very Good	<p><i>A Visitation</i> is a strong dance theatre work with the characterisation and story-telling, firmly rooted in the choreography. The lost quality of the ghostly figures is demonstrated in sharp, awkward movements building through to extensive lines and lifts. The duets drew on an inventive and intense vocabulary and the group section towards the end became highly charged and physical.</p> <p>The dancers' manipulation of the mannequin dolls was particularly effective, adding a further dimension to the sinister world that unfolded before us. At moments, I found my eye drawn to slight movements of the wooden hands or arms of the dolls around the edge of the stage which appeared to take on a life of their own. Despite having seen the piece once previously, I feel that there are layers of detail still to be experienced.</p> <p>The piece lasted for forty minutes.</p>
Theatre	Script Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 	-	N/A
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Very good	The work was presented to a very high standard with strong artistic cohesion throughout the different elements of the piece. The direction was effective with the strong characterisation from the dancers in both their own performance and in the manipulation of the mannequins.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 	Very good	The work was performed to recorded music by Svarte Greiner and Elegi and additional sound effects which contributed to the eerie atmosphere of the work. The choice of music worked cohesively with the choreography, direction and design.
Dance, Theatre	Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the costumes, set and lighting? • How did it work in the venue? • Was it technically proficient? (eg lighting and sound cues, etc). 	Excellent	<p>Design was an important element and contributed strongly to the theatre and emotion in the piece. The set placed the piece in a dusty house or attic, giving the impression of abandonment and faded glamour.</p> <p>The mannequin dolls were used very effectively in the work, manipulated by the dancers but taking on a life of their own. The individual costumes drew on period influences with lace gowns and flashes of tartan and giving the impression of ghostly figures with pale faces and dark, sunken eyes. The lighting effectively contributed to the sinister, haunting atmosphere created.</p> <p>The technical presentation and execution of was a high standard.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the production targeted at a particular audience? Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? Were you/ engaged/inspired? Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired? What was their response? Approximately how many people were there? Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many? What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? Were these targeted at specific age groups 	Very Good	<p>The performances were part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and attracted a good sized audience with only a few seats not taken. The audience responded well to the work with much applause and cheering at the end. It appeared to be a broad audience in age range and many nationalities as one would expect during the Fringe.</p> <p>I was engaged in the work throughout. The length of the work was appropriate and gave a short but compelling performance.</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"> Is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route? Are the spaces clean? What were the sight lines like? How big was it? 	<p>Over the past five years, the Zoo Southside venue has established itself as a Fringe venue strong in dance and physical theatre. It is a centrally located venue, on main bus routes.</p> <p>The performance space has good sightlines for the audience and is a wide stage area, although lacks depth. Given the compromises that often occur on the Fringe, this venue works well for work of this scale.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? Is there information on the venue's website? 	<p>A free programme was distributed to all audience members which provided information on the company and artists biographies. It would have benefited from a short statement from the choreographer on the ideas and inspiration for the work.</p> <p>There was a display of reviews in the foyer area.</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? What publicity materials are produced? Is it easy to understand? 	<p>SDT's performances were registered in the Fringe programme and also contained an advert for the shows. I was aware of other publicity including marketing leaflets and the performances were well reviewed. Scottish Dance Theatre performances were also part of the Made in Scotland programme.</p>

Criteria	Comment																
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where can you get the information? Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²? <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 acknowledgement of SAC funding on the publicity, programme and company website.</p>																
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>I was invited to the performance and a complementary ticket organised for me.</p>																
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? Was the length appropriate? 	<p>The performance began at 7pm and lasted for 40minutes. This was a good time slot during the Fringe, although a slightly earlier start would have made it possible for audiences to attend and then go on to a 7.30pm show elsewhere.</p>																
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the entrance clearly marked? Is there clear internal directional signage? Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 	<p>Signage was prominent and appropriate for a temporary Fringe venue.</p>																
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>N/A</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>Yes, on web site</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	N/A	Audio description of performances	N/A	Captioning	N/A	Lift/ramp	Yes	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	Yes, on web site
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<p>Customer service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	<p>Front of House and box office staff were friendly and dealt efficiently with the tight turn around between shows at the venue.</p>																

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.