



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:	Dundee Rep Theatre, Dundee
Title of Event :	The Life and Times of Girl A <i>and</i> NQR
Type of Event:	Dance
Date of Visit:	18 March 2010
Overall Rating:	Very Good

This was an engaging, entertaining and thought provoking double bill, that demonstrated the high technical standards, vitality and versatility of the dancers through new work that aims to push the boundaries of both movement and choreographic language

Name: Janice Parker

Date: 6 April 2010

Specialist Advisor

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	Both pieces in the double bill extended the conventional boundaries of dance vocabulary. Though very different, each piece worked with text and language, and also played with the border of performer as real person. This was both refreshing and interesting adding to the high standard and inventive repertoire audiences expect of Scottish Dance Theatre. The programme as a whole reflected the technical quality and versatility of the dancers, and the artistic vision of the company.
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. 	Very good	The two pieces worked extremely well as a double bill. Though distinctly different from each other in artistic content and vocabulary the pieces complimented and strengthened each other. <i>The Life and Times of Girl A</i> was choreographed by Ben Duke, a first collaboration with Scottish Dance Theatre who extend their repertoire through working with new and innovative choreographers. This was balanced by <i>NQR</i> , a choreographic collaboration between Janet Smith, Caroline Bowditch and Marc Brew of Scottish Dance Theatre.
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 ¹below for definition</p>	Good	<p>The programme notes for each of the two pieces reflected and supported the dance works, giving an insight to the artistic process from the choreographers' perspective while at the same time providing the audience with information on what to expect.</p> <p>The programme also provided a clear statement on the artistic vision and aims of the company which were reflected in the evening's programme. And the SDT website provides similar information on the company and its aims for those who want to access it in advance.</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? 	Very good	The performers were all highly skilled and versatile, and dancing beautifully both as individuals and as an ensemble. The engagement with the audience was strong and particularly necessary in these two pieces where language and text was also used. This came across well. The language and the movement working together and complimenting each other, with dancers moving seamlessly and excitingly between the two. Both pieces also played with the border of performer as person where the dancers were known by name, spoke to each other or the audience, and snippets of personal information (perhaps fact, perhaps fiction) was

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
			used in the choreography. This ability to 'reveal the person' was very well executed by the dancers, who were often witty and funny, and had the audience chuckling and thoroughly engaged. The dancers also executed a range of emotional experiences, through body and voice, that transferred to the audience who were appreciative and connected throughout the programme
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography</p> <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>Both works pushed the boundaries in concept and in choreographic language. The first piece <i>The Life and Times of Girl A</i> took place on a film set and real life superimposed itself on film script life. These layers were engaging and thought provoking. As already stated the use of text was potent as was the seamless flow from text to movement and back again – I found myself really drawn into the detail of the movement and really seeing its language and vocabulary. This piece also used a live video link to great effect and both sound and video were operated on set as part of the choreography. Again this worked very well, the video highlighting detailed facial expression as well as adding a 3-dimensional depth to the work.</p> <p><i>NQR</i> is a significant choreography in the way that it challenges and guides the audience to consider what it means to be 'not quite right' and 'different'. Who? Why? What? Are the questions illuminated through the movement vocabulary, absurd concepts of measurement, and meditative exploration of one's own body and movement.</p> <p><i>NQR</i> is a collaborative choreography by Janet Smith, Caroline Bowditch and Marc Brew. The two disabled performers/choreographers explored and examined interesting new vocabularies from their perspectives and developed this with the able bodied dancers. <i>NQR</i> was like a journey of numerous cadences coming at you one after the other - dark, funny, poignant, absurd, witty, powerful, strong, meditative. And though it did work as a whole piece, I was left wanting to see more of each of the three choreographers' work and a further development of each of their ideas and movement vocabularies.</p> <p>Both pieces were just over 30mins long and a good length in themselves and for the audience. Each had a strong cast of 11 dancers who wonderfully filled the stage working well in the scale and intimacy of the theatre space</p>
Theatre	<p>Script</p> <p>Please comment on this for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 	n/a	
Theatre, Dance	<p>Direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Very good	A very well presented double bill. All the dancers possess a versatility, vitality and confidence that they continuously project out to the audience, and equally possess an integrity and commitment to the choreographers intention

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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 music in both pieces was interesting and innovative. In <i>The Life and Times of Girl A</i> recorded music was operated from the stage by one of the dancers. This was integral to the piece with volume increasing and decreasing as part of the choreography. <i>NQR</i> featured both live and recorded music. Both worked well, particularly the presence, playing and composition of cellist Robin Mason who was in effect an additional and integral performer in the piece
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). 	Very good	This was a technically sound and proficient production. The costumes supported the choreography. The sets were simple, effective and evocative and in each case supported and enhanced the work both symbolically and practically. Visually both pieces were very strong. The design was well suited to the venue and would be adapt well to many different venues on the touring circuit.
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the production/event 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? Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led eg one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix? • Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development • What learning/skills development took place? • What was the quality of the art 	Good	The audience were lively, responsive and engaged. The applause was loud and warm. It was almost a full house and a diversity of ages, though not much cultural diversity that I noticed. There were a number of disabled people in the audience. There was no BSL/captions/audio description on the night I was there and I did not manage to find anything on the SDT website to say what was offered and when these would be. However individual venue websites did provide some information. I went to the pre-show artists talk given by artistic director Janet Smith along with Caroline Bowditch and Marc Brew, and although a small attendance there was a good response to the informative and engaging talk and an interesting and valuable question and answer session. Also, I liked that it was pre-show talk and not post-show. The SDT website has twitter, facebook, myspace and youtube links enabling engagement with and feedback from the audience

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>produced by the participants?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project? • How were participants recruited? • Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project? <p>Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?</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>The performances were on the company's home patch Dundee Rep Theatre. It is relatively easy to find, only 10 minutes from the train station and signposted from the city centre. Dundee is on the main Aberdeen – Edinburgh railway line and has a regular and numerous (if expensive!) train service. The theatre has a friendly atmosphere, has a cafe, restaurant and bar which are well used both pre and post show. The auditorium itself has an intimate feel and has good sight lines all round It is a pity the spaces for wheelchair users are only on the sides but sightlines are good</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>There were large posters/banners both outside and inside the venue. They were eye catching and visible, though displayed the pre-publicity caption 'coming soon' and did not indicate that the performance was on that evening. There were also a couple of monitors in the foyer and bar that showed footage of the company's performance and outreach work. The website is easy to access and follow and</p>

Criteria	Comment																
	provides good information																
Publicity/ pre-publicity – <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? • 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>SAC is acknowledged on all publicity and promotional material. The information is clear and easy to understand.</p> <p>The event and the tour was promoted electronically and also on flyers. I saw it at the beginning of the tour so the Company's website was my first line of contact. This was easy to access, clear and informative.</p>																
Ease of booking and payment	I booked on the Dundee Rep Theatre web site. This was relatively straightforward, though it does not allow you I to choose your seat.																
Timing of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? • Was the length appropriate? 	Yes start and finish time worked. And the programme was a good length and balance of two 30+ minutes pieces with an interval																
Signage and signposting <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? 	Yes, the entrance is clearly visible from the street and the internal signage is visible and easy to follow. Also the front of house staff were on hand and helpful.																
Access and provision for disabled people <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>no</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>no</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>no</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</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The venue has a wide range of alternative interpretation methods available to disabled audience members.</p>		Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	no	Audio description of performances	no	Captioning	no	Lift/ramp	yes	Accessible toilets	yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	yes
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BSL interpretation	no	Audio description of performances	no														
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Customer service <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 	The staff were efficient and friendly in all departments, and the venue is very responsive to the needs of disabled customers																

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.

Criteria	Comment
responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers?	

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.