



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:	Traverse Theatre
Title of Event :	Dog and Luxuria
Type of Event:	dance performance
Date of Visit:	Sunday 29 November 2009
Overall Rating:	Very Good

This was an impressive performance by an assured company of two seasoned repertory pieces. The combination of Liv Lorent's Luxuria and Hofesh Schechter's Dog worked very well and achieved a suitably uplifting ending to the Traverse's new Autumn Festival. The two works show off the versatility and energy of the company to great effect.

Name: Lucy Mason

Date: 2 December 2009

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	<p>Both works performed have been in the SDT repertoire for some time and I have seen then both before. Each piece has a distinctive vision and over-riding idea which sustains it throughout. Luxuria is lush and lustrous and erotic; Dog is edgy and quirky and energetic. They sat together well and showed off the dancers' aptitude to respond with complete commitment to very different styles of choreographers.</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. 	Very Good	<p>The programme appears to have been chosen for the Traverse Autumn Festival from a selection of repertoire listed in the free programme. I understand that different works had been selected to perform at each venue on the current tour, which included China and Dubai. This seems an excellent way to maximise the company's reputation and versatility and to ensure appropriate works are seen in appropriate contexts.</p> <p>The programme worked well within the Traverse's Festival programme, and it was good to see the company back on that stage after several years absence. Both pieces worked well within the space, although I felt that Luxuria in particular could have benefited from more room to breathe.</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 ¹below for definition</p>	Very Good	<p>Luxuria: Liv Lorent writes in the programme of her desire to 'import personal truth into choreography'. She talks of the piece as a means of expressing innermost emotion to make it 'universal'. I would say that the piece succeeds in projecting a dense and intense set of emotions, achieved through the combination of music, movement and design.</p> <p>Dog: There is a short interview with Hofesh Shechter in the programme in which he says that he started this piece from an interest in juxtaposing hard movement with soft movement and then watching and questioning the movement and images which follow. I would say that he succeeds exceptionally well in finding a way to capture and present these variations and developments, and of evoking a 'feel and atmosphere' through a bold and distinctive combination of movement, lighting and sound.</p> <p>I believe that both pieces were commissioned by SDT especially for the company.</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	Performers/tutors <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	<p>The company are a group of highly competent and disciplined professional dancers. Despite many changes of personnel over the years, the company retains a distinctive sense of cohesion and conviction under Janet Smith's expert guidance. It is great to see the company's commitment to training and sustaining its dancers borne out by the presence of recent apprentices alongside the long-standing and assured performances of James MacGillivray and Ruth Janssen.</p> <p>Each piece required very different skills from the performers, although strength and stamina were key to the success of both. The dancers appeared comfortable and confident with the theatricality and intensity of each piece and conveyed these qualities effectively to the audience.</p>
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? 	Good	<p>Luxuria: The work was made in 2004. It remains a lush piece of work which is unashamedly romantic and sweeping in its scope. I have seen the work three times now and whilst I enjoy the swirling skirts and the sweeping music, I have never found the partner work entirely satisfying. I am not sure whether it is because the seemingly overt sexuality of the piece doesn't sit convincingly with the young dancers, or whether it is because of the slightly awkward mechanics of getting the girls to balance on the boys shoulders...or whether it is because I find the way in which the relationship between the sexes is presented uncomfortable. However, I can see that it works within its own terms and it has clearly been a huge success for the company.</p> <p>I liked the solo sections at the start of the piece very much. Each solo was striking, individual and powerful.</p> <p>Dog: This is a clever and engaging piece of choreography that makes good uses of the dancers' individual talents and of their ensemble work. The movement vocabulary is varied and distinctive. I enjoyed its energy and quirkiness and its tight relationship with the music. I liked the brief spoken introduction which helps the audience to place the piece.</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	Both pieces were well executed and were very polished, as you would expect after many presentations.

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? 	Good	<p>Both pieces made strong use of recorded music throughout and in both cases the music was core to the successful impact of the piece. For Luxuria the music was a mixture of various scores (Tsabropoulos, Richter, Silvestrov, Calexico, Morelenbaum, Pinto credited) and for Dog it was created by the very talented Mr Shechter himself plus some excerpts from Fan farra (cabua-le-le) from Brasileiro by Sergio Mendes, Verdi, Bach and Aleph, ATM and Dance Music by Ophir Ilzetzki.</p>
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	<p>Luxuria: Vast hooped skirts were worn by the girls which lifted to reveal corset like undergarments and lengths of strings which were pulled by and connected to the boys at different times. It wasn't clear whether these skirts were objects of power or imprisonment for the girls – they appeared to engulf the boys at times and at other times to tie the girls to the boys. They are very impressive constructions and add tremendous visual and emotional power to the piece, but seemed cumbersome at times. There were strings hanging from all the costumes and these were used to great effect at the start when the dancers moved at great speed in repetitive choreography.</p> <p>The lighting was suitably atmospheric and soft, in contrast to the more stark and punchy atmosphere of Dog which achieved a powerful visual impact through contrasting lighting and sound, and silence. The costumes for Dog were simple and relaxed.</p>
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? 	Good	<p>I was not aware of any particular target audience. The theatre appeared to be almost full, possibly playing to 180 people. There was a great variety of ages in the audience, including a large group of young boys who had come with Andy Howitt from Ydance and who appeared to be completely engaged by Luxuria (if a little embarrassed and giggly at times). They were less engaged by Dog. I understand that there were some Telford students in too.</p> <p>The applause was plentiful and a small group stood at the end.</p> <p>I was not aware of any supporting activities around this particular presentation although SDT Learning has a strong team and an excellent reputation for delivering education programmes.</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 Traverse is situated in the West End of Edinburgh and has built up a strong reputation for contemporary dance programming.</p> <p>SDT used to perform regularly at the Traverse before graduating up to the Edinburgh Festival Theatre. It was good to see these two works with the intimacy which this theatre provides for an audience. Whilst they seemed a bit squashed there is a definite vitality and immediacy which is gained from seeing the work in such proximity.</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 leaflets about the show in racks and posters up on the walls in the bar and box office.</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? • 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>.</p>
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>Good</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>all fine.</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>Good internal signage. There is Braille in the lifts.</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.

Criteria	Comment																			
<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 data-bbox="571 185 821 253"></th> <th data-bbox="826 185 917 253">Yes/ No</th> <th data-bbox="922 185 1165 253"></th> <th data-bbox="1169 185 1262 253">Yes/ No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 253 821 353">BSL interpretation</td> <td data-bbox="826 253 917 353">Yes</td> <td data-bbox="922 253 1165 353">Audio description of performances</td> <td data-bbox="1169 253 1262 353">Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 353 821 432">Captioning</td> <td data-bbox="826 353 917 432">Yes</td> <td data-bbox="922 353 1165 432">Lift/ramp</td> <td data-bbox="1169 353 1262 432">Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 432 821 707">Accessible toilets</td> <td data-bbox="826 432 917 707">Yes</td> <td data-bbox="922 432 1165 707">Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td data-bbox="1169 432 1262 707">Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	Yes	Audio description of performances	Yes	Captioning	Yes	Lift/ramp	Yes	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	Yes
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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>Excellent</p>																			

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.