



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:	Project Y (Y Dance) and Oxford Youth Theatre Dance Company
Venue:	Lemon Tree, Aberdeen
Type of Event:	Dance
Date of Visit:	Saturday 1 st August 2009
Overall Rating:	Very good

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Date: 17 August 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	Vision and imagination of work <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 have followed Project Y's work closely. I thought the work by Artistic Director, Andy Howitt was the strongest piece of work I have seen by him. It included some very interesting and original choreography and matched the music well. It included some spatial and linear ideas which gave good form to the overall structure coupled with some interesting smaller group sections. There were still too many people onstage much of the time (as with earlier works) which tires your eyes and brain out but he probably wants the dancers to be used as much as possible.</p> <p>On paper the other works sounded interesting but they were all over long and lacked clear direction. These choreographers (all choreographers) need time to make work, edit their ideas, condense their choreography and give insight to how they want the work to be performed – and performed again. I saw the work in Glasgow on Weds 29th July then again at Lemon Tree on Sat 1st Aug and two pieces did not have the same clarity of performance and professionalism by then.</p>
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection <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>Project Y seems to be embedded in the work of Y Dance now. In the main, the participants performed with commitment and concentration. They clearly enjoyed the experience as did the audience. The performance might inspire young people to take part in other Y Dance activities.</p> <p>This particular event was part of Aberdeen International Youth Festival and was one evening of several in the dance programming.</p>
All	Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance <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>Each of the four works communicated their artistic themes with varying degrees of success. The printed material and posters related to the performance – an energetic evening of dance by young people.</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

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 performers are all young amateurs selected by audition who, overall performed confidently and successfully engaged the audience. However, there was a huge disparity in the technical and performance abilities of the performers, with the boys demonstrating far less ability and experience than the girls. A handful of Project Y dancers showed good technique and excellent performance skills. (The Oxford Youth Dancers were slightly less confident and one had a few faltering moments).</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? 	<p>Excellent</p> <p>Good</p> <p>Good</p> <p>Very Good</p>	<p>The choreography of the evening was all original and included 4 pieces of work by Project Y.</p> <p>1) Andy Howitt's work. All 24 dancers were included in this piece and given a lot of interesting choreography to do. There were complex patterns, unusual movements and a driving and relentless style which matched the music well. Some of the dancers performed with great intensity. All the dancers showed total commitment to the work and were extremely well rehearsed.</p> <p>2) Daniel Aing's work included 12 of the company though 3 were only at the start and the end to make the 12 hours on clock motif. The work used music which weren't strong pieces first time around and now they sound dated and cheesy. Some dancers corpsed or started weirdly grinning which didn't help the piece. The choreographic moves were very limited though more attention had been given to the use of space. One female dancer showed great 'popping'. The audience whooped this work though it could have been greatly edited for stronger effect.</p> <p>3) Allan Irvine's work was an homage to street dance through the ages with a couple of costume changes for the cast of 12. The piece had disappointingly limited choreography and rather kitsch performance from some dancers some of the time.</p> <p>4) Anna Kenrick's work opened with effective dramatic and striking poses from the cast of 24. It included some interesting pair and trio sections then a lot of run, arc and curve across the stage in lines as in class. The music was bland but the costumes were very striking.</p>

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
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? 	Good	The works were mostly well interpreted with the occasional inappropriate performance style creeping into 2 of the pieces. There was a huge disparity in the skill and experience level of the dancers.
Dance, Theatre	<p>Use of music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 	<p>Good</p> <p>Excellent</p>	<p>Recorded music was used in all 4 pieces. The choices of music were not strong or effective with the great exception of the work by Andy (music by Mogwai).</p> <p>Andy's work echoed the drive of this music effectively and dramatically.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Design</p> <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>The costumes in Andy's work were simple (checked shirt and trousers in different colours) and gave a strong, clean look to the work.</p> <p>The concept for the costumes for Daniel's piece was strong (baggy tops with suggestion of clock face motif and baggy trousers) but very unflattering (and they looked very hot).</p> <p>The costumes for Allan's piece were varied and quirky (clubbing outfits thro the years type).</p> <p>The salwar kameez worn by the cast in Anna's piece were in beautiful colours and suggested the far east.</p> <p>The work included the occasional slow lighting cue. The colour on the back cyc was strikingly effective in some of the pieces.</p>
All	<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <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 	Good	<p>The production was appropriate to a general audience which had a very short run of 4 dates at 3 venues. The performance was sold out and the audience included quite a lot of young people and quite a lot of older people. Not many from any age group outside of that.</p> <p>The audience was generally appreciative though there was a surprisingly short fast burst of applause after Andy's work. I really enjoyed that work but appreciate that the music might not have appealed to a more conservative audience. In contrast, there were some whoops at the end of Daniel's work which I enjoyed far less.</p> <p>A major problem of the night was that there were no programmes giving the running order until the interval when Y Dance staff then</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were these targeted at specific age groups? <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <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 produced by the participants? • 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>		<p>offered to sell their programmes (£2). Don't know that many people took them up on the offer. Why couldn't they have given them away? It was the last performance....</p> <p>After Project Y took their curtain call, the whole house started to move outside. When most were halfway downstairs one member of staff called out that there was another piece by Oxford Youth. About a quarter of us returned and waited 10 minutes while the stage was set up (with a set). The piece was worth seeing, with good relevant youth content (feeling lonely, left out, isolated) and strong performances. The performance ended at 10.30pm.</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>Lemon Tree is fairly easy to find. The stage is small. The sight lines are good. The seat I sat on had a great chunk of metal sticking out. Everything in the house looks a bit past it and jaded. The bar and foyer are ok. We had to wait on the stairs before being admitted to the house.</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 Y Dance zap stands by box office. The venue's website had basic information about the programme.</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>I was sent leaflets and posters by Y Dance. I was given a programme at the premiere night in Glasgow. The programme was easy to understand though the print quality of the photographs was a bit fuzzy.</p> <p>SAC funding is acknowledged on all materials.</p>
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>When I clicked on buy tickets on Lemon Tree Box Office, nothing happened. I phoned Box Office instead. There was a 50p booking fee.</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>Started at 8pm. Ended at 10.30pm. Felt very long.</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>Clear entrance and signs inside. Ushers assisted to direct people.</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.

<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? 		Yes/No		Yes/No
	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	No
	Captioning	Don't know	Lift/ramp	Don't know
	Accessible toilets	yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	Don't know
<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>Box Office and catering fine.</p> <p>FOH staff didn't know how to deal with the fact that the audience were leaving and hadn't realised there was another work to follow. No-one made an announcement.</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.