



### 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.**

<b>Artist/Company:</b>	Scotland's National Performing Youth Companies – Scottish Youth Theatre, YDance (Scottish Youth Dance) and National Youth Pipe Band
<b>Venue:</b>	Stirling Castle
<b>Title of Event :</b>	Tam O Shanter
<b>Type of Event:</b>	Performance
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	Very Good

*An imaginative and visionary production of Tam O' Shanter, performed in the first ever collaboration of Scottish Youth Dance, Scottish Youth Theatre and the National Youth Pipe Band.*

Name: June Adamson

Date: 22/10/09

**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"> <li>Quality of ideas</li> <li>if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons</li> </ul>	Excellent	<p>This was the first ever collaboration between the three performing youth companies in Scotland – Scottish Youth Dance, Scottish Youth Theatre and the National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland in an exciting production of <i>Tam O' Shanter</i> – Robert Burns epic poem. Overall the vision and imagination of this collaborative work was excellent and the performers were very talented.</p> <p>I have seen Scottish Y Dance once before in the Summer '08. This was quite a different venture and challenge for them and one that all performers seemed to relish.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation?</li> <li>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</li> </ul>	Excellent	<p>This commissioned production is part of Homecoming Scotland 2009 and is the first collaboration between the 3 National Youth Companies. Homecoming Scotland was a year long programme of events and activities happening all over Scotland to honour the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Robert Burn's birth. I saw <i>Tam O'Shanter</i> in the stunning setting of the Great Hall at Stirling Castle. It then toured to Eden Court Theatre, Inverness and Haddo House in Aberdeenshire</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material?</li> <li>How well did it communicate the artistic themes?</li> <li>How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission?</li> </ul> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for definition</p>	Very good	<p>The production was very successful in telling the story of Tam O' Shanter in a unique way including drama dance and music. There were times when the fusion of the 3 youth companies could have been better. Eg near the beginning the pipes did drown out the words that were spoken which was frustrating for the audience. The pipes were lovely and it might have worked better if we had been able to appreciate them perhaps with some simple dance movements instead of spoken words that we could not hear.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments.</li> <li>How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience?</li> <li>In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop?</li> </ul>	Very good	<p>The standard of the young dancers, actors and pipers was excellent. They gave an exciting, gritty and engaging performance.</p>

<sup>1</sup> 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	<b>Choreography/Use of choreography</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the work original?</li> <li>How was the space used?</li> <li>How many dancers were there and how were they used?</li> <li>How long was the piece?</li> </ul>	Very Good	The choreography was very clever in its use of a fairly small space. Choreographer, Andy Howitt used lifts to increase the space available to him and this worked well for the audience too who were all sitting at ground level. There were 8 dancers, but there were times when some of the other performers were moving – 9 actors, 6 drummers and 7 pipers. The witches/Devil dance was particularly good.
Theatre	<b>Script</b> Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>new work</li> <li>second productions</li> <li>classics where the original has been substantially changed</li> </ul>	Very good	The story was easy to follow and unfolded in an interesting way. The leading actors were very talented and Tam was outstanding. The ending, comes full circle – Tam did not learn his lesson – it left me flat and disappointed that his attitude reflected much of today's society and offered no hope.
Theatre, Dance	<b>Direction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the work well interpreted?</li> <li>Was it well cast?</li> <li>Was it well presented?</li> </ul>	Very Good	Overall the direction was very good, but there were times when it seemed that the various art forms were competing rather than allowing one to shine whilst the others supported or sat back for a moment.
Dance, Theatre	<b>Use of music</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the music/ sound used enhance the production?</li> <li>Is it live or recorded?</li> </ul>	Excellent	The music – both the piping and the music composed by Quee McArthur was of excellent quality throughout
Dance, Theatre	<b>Design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How were the costumes, set and lighting?</li> <li>How did it work in the venue?</li> <li>Was it technically proficient? (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</li> </ul>	Excellent	The design of costume, set and lighting worked very well and obviously has the touring schedule and the particular venues in mind in the initial plans. Overall technical quality of the of the presentation very good with excellent lighting and sound cues.
All	<b>Quality of Public Engagement</b> Performing Arts/Education - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the production targeted at a particular audience?</li> <li>Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants?</li> <li>Were you/ engaged/inspired?</li> <li>Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired?</li> <li>What was their response?</li> <li>Approximately how many people were there?</li> <li>Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled?</li> <li>Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many?</li> <li>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?</li> <li>Were these targeted at specific age groups?</li> </ul>	Very good	<p>There was an audience was approximately 200 – a mix of ages from young children to older adults. The audience seemed engaged throughout and to thoroughly enjoy the production.</p> <p>I wasn't aware of any additional interpretive events.</p> <p>This was an event rather than an educational activity and yet because it involved the three youth companies working together I think that the sharing of ideas, skills in the making of the production for all of the young people involved was an invaluable educational experience. This was their first joint production and it was very good, but I think that they could build on this and produce excellent productions in the future.</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"> <li>• Is it easy to find?</li> <li>• Is it on a main transport route?</li> <li>• Are the spaces clean?</li> <li>• What were the sight lines like?</li> <li>• How big was it?</li> </ul>	<p>The Great Hall at Stirling Castle was a stunning setting. The production was skilfully set, but the seating all in one level was a major drawback for many of the audience to fully enjoy the whole experience. It was difficult to see if you were not in the first few rows – I stood for the entire show. Raked seating for a similar production would be ideal.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event?</li> <li>• Is there information on the venue's website?</li> </ul>	<p>Programmes were available and information about each of the three youth companies.</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in?</li> <li>• What publicity materials are produced?</li> <li>• Is it easy to understand?</li> <li>• Where can you get the information?</li> <li>• Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>?</li> </ul> <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>The event featured in the Homecoming Scotland 2009 guide booklet and on the websites of all three youth companies and on the Homecoming website and websites of all the venues.</p> <p>Scottish Arts Council funding was acknowledged in programme and on websites</p>
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>I telephoned my booking. Staff were friendly and the process was straightforward.</p>
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?</li> <li>• Was the length appropriate?</li> </ul>	<p>The production lasted 55 minutes and went straight through without an interval. This was fine though I wish I had realised in advance.</p>
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the entrance clearly marked?</li> <li>• Is there clear internal directional signage?</li> <li>• Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops?</li> </ul>	<p>Stirling Castle is well sign posted.</p>

<sup>2</sup> 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><b>Access and provision for disabled people</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event</li> </ul> <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue?</li> </ul>	<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>?</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>?</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	No	Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	?	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	?
	Yes/No		Yes/No														
BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	No														
Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	?														
Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	?														
<p><b>Customer service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)</li> <li>If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers?</li> </ul>	<p>Most of the Castle apartments are accessible to wheelchair users. Disabled parking/toilets available and a courtesy car for those with difficulty with steep inclines and steps.</p> <p>Staff were friendly.</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.