



Scottish **Arts** Council

## ARTISTIC EVALUATION

It should be noted the views expressed in this evaluation are intended to represent, as far as possible, an objective aesthetic judgement. Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences.

**Artist/Company: Scottish Youth Theatre**

**Venue: Scottish Youth Theatre, Glasgow**

**Title of Event: 1 Week Junior Performance Course (8-11 year olds) 'A Lesson from Dr Seuss'**

**Type of Event:** (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc) *Workshop and informal showing*

**Date of Visit: 8/08/07 and 11/08/07**

**Overall Rating: Excellent**

*(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses. If the management of the event affects the overall enjoyment of the event, please comment, but the overall rating should be based on the artistic merit of the event.)*

I felt that this short, intensive course was an excellent broad introduction for children (aged 8-11) into the essentials of drama and performance skills. The w/shop exercises were clearly and economically explained and sessions were well structured with the different exercises following an obvious line of development. The final performance was professionally produced and gave the participants the opportunity for both individual and group work.

Name: Rebecca Robinson \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 11 \_\_\_/08 \_\_\_/07 \_\_\_\_\_

Specialist Advisor    x    Scottish Arts Council Officer    *Please circle the relevant title*

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 at the end of 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 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:**

- 1 - Very Poor** – standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- 2 - Poor** – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.
- 3 - Competent** – routine rather than especially interesting.
- 4 - Good** – well conceived and executed
- 5 - Excellent** – conceived and executed to a 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 - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.</p>	Excellent	<p>I felt that this short, intensive course was an excellent broad introduction for children (aged 8-11) into the essentials of drama and performance skills. Using the Dr Seuss stories as a starting point allowed the children to improvise within the framework of a familiar narrative that also provided room for imaginative development. The workshops were well structured and professionally executed. The final performance – to family and friends –was professionally produced and met the high standards that the SYT is known for reaching.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	Excellent	<p>This 1-week course for 8-11 year olds in Glasgow was part of the SYT Summer Festival 2007 programme. The programme also included a similar course in Edinburgh and 4 'foundation' courses – 2 in Glasgow and one each in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. This provides an excellent opportunity to develop and complement the weekly workshop programme that runs throughout the year – allowing young people to develop drama skills in a more intensive environment.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for guidance</p>	Excellent	<p>The professionally run summer school succeeded in meeting the company's stated objective to: "provide a quality theatre arts experience to...young people" as well as providing "excellence in youth theatre arts provision in Scotland". The course also provided ample opportunity for the "personal and social development of the individual participants in communication and social skills" (e.g. through regular and intensive team work activities, active participation in feedback sessions, development of vocal and physical skills, performance experience, etc).</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	Excellent	<p>The course was directed and led by Fraser MacLeod [FMac] (SYT Assistant Director) with assistance from trainee Fiona Manson. The w/shop exercises were clearly and economically explained and sessions were well structured with the different exercises following an obvious line of development. The w/shop that I observed seemed focussed on the 'process', rather than the 'product' (i.e. performance), and time was given for participants to watch, learn and respond to their peers. FMac delivered the disciplined w/shops with humour and managed to maintain the participants' energy levels</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
			<p>and concentration throughout the w/shop. Ross Brown (Musical Director) led an upbeat musical session accompanied by live piano. During this session the participants quickly learnt a challenging song, which became a repeated refrain in the final performance. Both the drama and music sessions provided a good introduction to essential performance skills (e.g. chorus work, mirroring, spatial awareness, vocal exercises, singing, structured improvisations, complicity, etc) with emphasis being placed on discipline, concentration and structured teamwork. W/shop leaders were encouraging and approachable but clearly adopted positions of authority.</p> <p>The participants appeared to transfer the high level of commitment and engagement evident in the w/shop to the final performance of ‘A Lesson from Dr Seuss’.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/a	
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	The final script was the result of the w/shop process and gave each of the children an opportunity for some individual performance work.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	The final, informal performance - ‘A Lesson from Dr Seuss’ - was a dynamic and tightly rehearsed and performed production that combined well-choreographed chorus work with opportunities for individual performances. The high production values (the performance took place in the SYT theatre) gave the committed young cast the opportunity to experience performance within a professional environment.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Good	With great fervour, the young people sang the song they had learnt during the w/shop to a pre-recorded backing track. The song was an original composition by Ross Brown.
Dance, Theatre	Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.	Good	Both the set and costumes were simple and effective - the children wore striped t-shirts over their clothes to give a suggestion of the Dr Seuss characters and the set -comprised a couple of adaptable wooden boxes. The SYT performance space was well lit and the occasional use of bubble machines help add a magical element to the performance.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p><b>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</b></p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>	Excellent	<p>Nineteen children between the ages 8 to 11 years old participated in the weeklong workshop and the Saturday afternoon performance. There was a fairly equal gender balance (8 boys and 11 girls). The resources available to SYT allowed participants to enjoy privileged access to excellent technical and human resources. As the session that I observed progressed I was aware that the participants were increasingly encouraged to become more aware of and engaged in their own and the groups actions – when individual and group awareness began to surface then gradually more performance elements were introduced. The participants were given positive critical encouragement and, likewise, encouraged to be positively critical. I felt that the experience w/shop provided participants with sound grounding in the essentials of performance/ drama skills that was fun but also disciplined and focussed.</p>
All	<p><b>Audience</b></p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors’ books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>		<p>An audience of approximately 65 friends and family of the participants attended the final performance. The performance appeared to be much enjoyed by all.</p>
All	<p><b>Additional Interpretative activity</b> – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist’s talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>	N/a	
All	<p><b>Outcomes of education activity</b> – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?</p>	Good	<p>As mentioned above, this weeklong course gave the participants a good grounding in basic drama and performance skills. Further course results for participants also may have included other less easily evaluated outcomes – such as confidence building, developing self awareness, etc.</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?*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Suitability of the venue for the event	I was impressed by the façade and resources of the new purpose built SYT building and it was, in many ways, a very suitable venue for the event. However, I did think that the rehearsal rooms were quite small and inflexible and felt that the room felt cramped holding 19 participants and 3 w/shop leaders. The room was not conducive to more physically based work.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The audience were given an A4 black and white programme that contained a cast and production crew list and a brief intro to the production including the words from the song/ refrain.
Publicity/ pre-publicity – leaflets, posters, websites, etc. What is produced, is it easy to understand and where can you get the information? Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.	The course was advertised on the SYT website. The website contains much information on SYT as well as booking forms and is easy to navigate.
Ease of booking and payment	N/a
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	SYT is in the heart of Glasgow city centre and easy to access by all main transport routes.
External signage and signposting	Externally, the building is not clearly signposted.
Internal directional signage	Internally, the layout of the building is clear.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Access and provision for disabled people was not easily visible.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	W/shop and performance times seemed appropriate – with regular breaks for the w/shops – and the performance with a running time of @40 minutes. The performance took place at 3pm on the Saturday.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Box office and front of house staff were all friendly and efficient.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	SAC funding was acknowledged on all publicity material that I was aware of.

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<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.

### **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.