



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: Shetland Youth Theatre**

**Venue: Royal Lyceum Theatre**

**Title of Event: NT Connections 'Red Sky'**

**Type of Event: Youth Theatre performance**

**Date of Visit: 16/06/07**

**Overall Rating: Excellent**

This was a well directed and performed play, engaging and absorbing, with good design, and excellent use of a large cast of enthusiasts. There was particularly good use of movement and music, and value was given to each and every actor.

The play itself was also excellent, wittily written, with several themes and layers of meaning.

This performance should give Shetland YT a sense of pride – it showed up well within the Connections Festival.

Name: SYLVIA DOW Date: 22 / 07 / 07

**Specialist Advisor**  
*relevant title*

Scottish Arts Council Officer

*Please circle the*

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	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.	excellent	This is my first experience of Shetland Youth Theatre and I was mightily impressed with the creativity shown in the production, and the imaginative use of the resources they have, in terms of their young actors. There were lots of lovely moments, one in particular when they all began to sing. It was quite a 'hairs on the back of the neck' moment
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.  If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.	excellent	The performance was part of the Edinburgh based performances of the NT Connections Festival for youth theatres. 8 young companies performed at the Lyceum over the course of 4 days of which 6 were Scottish companies, the 2 others coming from Sweden and Ireland. The Festival gives a choice of 10 specially commissioned new plays written for youth theatre groups and they are performed throughout the year in 18 UK venues. The feeling engendered by these shared experiences always creates a good 'buzz' and this evening was no different with all the youth theatre groups turning out to support their fellow thespians from other groups, and giving a really generous response to the performances.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.  Education events – see <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	excellent	The stated aims are really those of the festival which are stated as being created to: <b><i>'respond to a widespread demand for challenging new plays for young people to perform. NT Connections commissions 10 new plays every year, penned by some of the hottest talent in world theatre. The plays are then brought to life through hundreds of productions, created by thousands of young actors, technicians, designers and directors, from across the UK, Ireland and further a field.'</i></b> In this the festival patently succeeds with a series of plays which each year are never less than interesting and challenging for the young performers. That such groups can rise to the challenge was amply demonstrated by the 2 groups I saw on this particular evening.

<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
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>	good	<p>The young performers ably demonstrated their talents in this production. There were 2 distinct groups, the older ones taking the main speaking parts and the younger ones acting as a kind of chorus, but all showed enormous commitment and focus. In all cases the principal character roles were very well played with a good grasp of character and, in most cases, good vocal production. The ideas within the play and the ample humour came over very well. There was a noticeable lack of pace to start with, but as the actors warmed to their task the dynamic improved and the piece became really quite gripping.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	excellent	<p>There was no choreography as such but I'd like to mention here the excellence of the stage movement, used to particularly good effect with the large 'chorus'. This enabled the 'extras' to add real value to the play and, I would think, give the large company of young actors outside of the principal speaking parts, a feeling of having real roles, and real goals. The movement was brilliantly conceived and very well rehearsed</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	excellent	<p>This was a really sound script by Bryony Lavery with an engaging mixture of real life relationships, historical mystery, moral dilemma, and a good deal of humour. I enjoyed it very much. It was absolutely right for this company, and would suit most youth companies.</p> <p>Wound around the relationships of 3 archaeology interns trying to work their way through a love triangle, while attempting to unravel a historical mystery arising from the dig they are working on, the script wittily compares and contrasts with the long dead subjects of the mystery, who themselves are mystified by the ways of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	excellent	<p>The direction (John Haswell) was spot-on for this company, which is quite large with a mixture of ages and talents. The nuances and humour of the script were well brought out, the talents of individual young actors given value, and the whole thing felt very well rehearsed. Stage movement was excellent (see below) and I particularly liked the fact that everyone onstage was costumed well, was given something positive and relevant to do, and was given his or her place. I don't think anyone on stage would feel that they had not something important to contribute</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	excellent	<p>This was particularly good – an original mixture of live and taped music played by a musician, with wind instruments and sound system from one of the boxes. It was very atmospheric and added immeasurably to the experience.</p>
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.	excellent	<p>A well designed set giving a good impression of the heat and dust and general business of an archaeological dig. The set was achieved using different levels and a series of scaffolds, trestles and packing cases. It fitted the space very well. Costumes were uniformly excellent, well conceived</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			and executed.
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	Technical standards were high – lighting design atmospheric and delivered to a high standard. No technical incompetence or glitches.
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>Rating: excellent</p> <p>The play and performance were absolutely appropriate for the performers and the audience, which was a mixture of parents and friends and other youth theatre participants. The house was about 45% full. Reaction was enthusiastic.</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>	n/a	

## 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
Suitability of the venue for the event	Excellent – great to see the young people performing in a professional theatre venue with all the benefits – technical, front of house, and general value – that brings
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There was a pack available which included information about the festival, and about each of the youth theatres performing. This was free of charge.
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.	Some information gleaned from Lyceum website and from that of NT connections. Information available at venue (see above)
Ease of booking and payment	Competent and friendly box office staff.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Lyceum is in a very central location and easy to find – and accessible by many modes of transport. Currently there difficulties connected with the Usher Hall works but signage on the hoardings leads people clearly to the Lyceum.
External signage and signposting	All good.
Internal directional signage	Good.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Signposting of toilets very clear.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Length was just right and it started on time.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The Lyceum staff are always friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. Bars are usually pretty full but this being a youth performance, not on this occasion. ( But I wish they'd take the ice cream out of the freezer 10 minutes before the interval – it's always too hard to get the spoon into!)
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Acknowledged on all Lyceum and LYT literature

<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



**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.