



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:	Stammer Productions
Venue:	Traverse Theatre
Title of Event :	The Making of Doubt
Type of Event:	Dance
Date of Visit:	Tuesday 24 November 2009
Overall Rating:	Very Good

This was an impressive performance of a challenging and intriguing piece which makes good use of props to explore the dancers' relationships with their own bodies, with each other and with an audience. It was well executed by a fine group of dancers. I felt there was some scope to develop the way in which each distinct section of movement flowed into the next to achieve a more seamless whole.

Name: Lucy Mason

Date: 1 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	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>This piece bears the hallmarks of Colette Sadler's ever- enquiring mind and curiosity about the role and aesthetic of the body – in its own realm, in relation to others, and in performance. The piece consists of different sections with distinct styles, all of which explored the idea of what we see and how we see it. Two sections involved the use of full and part-body dummies or dolls to achieve visual confusion and distortion, and potentially sometimes discomfort, on the part of the audience. One section made use of cardboard sheets which moved around the space without any visible evidence of human involvement.</p> <p>This was the first time that I have seen Colette working with a large group of dancers, and not performing herself. In this respect, it was clearly a development from previous works, and showed that her very distinctive style and vocabulary can resonate through her choreography on others.</p> <p>I would imagine that her interest in using dummy bodies may have grown from her own exploration into physicality in her previous work, Ddummy – in which her own body appeared to take on its own form and movement, apart from her.</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>The piece would appear to be core to the vision of Stammer Productions. It provides a physical representation and exploration of the philosophical and intellectual ideas around performer and viewer which concern Colette.</p> <p>It was shown as part of a new festival of performance at the Traverse Theatre. It sat very well within a week of performances intended to complement the Traverse's usual offering of new theatre writing. Colette's work has an inherent theatricality that made it a very appropriate choice for the programme.</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? 	Good	<p>There was no programme on the night and so no information to inform or reflect on the performance.</p> <p>The website describes the piece in a series of questions which are framed in quite academic language. There is an essay by Colette on the making of the piece which references the philosophers and artists who have informed, in part, its development. I believe the production did achieve against the ideas reflected on here. She did manage to find a mechanism for distorting the body and disorientating the viewer in the way I</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Education events – see ¹ below for definition		believe was intended. However, had I read the website details in advance I think I may have found the ideas and the approach rather daunting and off-putting. The piece is credited on the website as a Tramway Co-production made with support from The Scottish Arts Council, Glasgow City Council, Fabrik Potsdam, PACT Zollverein Essen and WP Zimmer Essen.
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? 	Good	Without programme details I cannot confirm details of the performers but I presume they were all professional. They appeared happy with the variety of styles required of them, from very rapid and repetitive movement at the start, through to very still and contemplative work with the dolls. They worked well together as an ensemble, and were very comfortable and skilled in the manipulation of their 'doll' colleagues and additional limbs. They did not engage directly with the audience, and seemed quite self-absorbed. In the final section some of them appeared to acknowledge the humour inherent in their movement, but for the most part the performers remained rather serious.
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? 	Very Good	The work was very quirky and striking. It was bold and inventive and looked very comfortable on the Traverse stage. The use of the dolls and of the prosthetics was very cleverly and fluidly integrated into the movement of the dancers to achieve a slick and beguiling oddity. On the website the dancers are also credited with choreography and I could see that each dancer had acquired a very distinct relationship with their false limbs... There were four dancers who performed in solos, duets and group pieces. The piece lasted just under an hour.
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? 	Good	As ever with Colette's work I got a sense that all aspects of the performance had been carefully studied and developed and were underpinned by a deep sense of integrity. I liked the way that the work was expressed beyond the usual definitions of dance. It was very theatrical and playful especially when the dolls

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
			<p>were being seated and carried around the space. I liked the way that the initial respect for the dolls changed to disregard as they were thrown around – revealing the contrivance. The confusion of limbs in the piles of bodies was also effective.</p> <p>However, whilst each element of the work was well executed they did not hang together entirely successfully. I felt that the section with cardboard dancers did not succeed as was intended.</p>
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	The music was commissioned from Zoviet France. It provided an atmospheric and complementary sound environment for the piece.
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). 	Good	The piece was presented on an open stage with no set. The lighting was simple and effective. The costumes were also simple but effective with the use of ‘hoodies’ for all the dancers and the dolls helping to tease the audience. I enjoyed the blend of colours in the costumes. The performance appeared to go ahead without any technical problems.
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>There was no guidance about the target audience however the piece was very well received by a large and very mixed age range of audience. I would estimate that there were over 100 people were in the audience which was impressive for a first visit by Colette. The show was followed by a party in the bar to mark the Traverse’s Autumn Festival and I am not sure whether some people may have come to the show in order to be at the theatre for the party.</p> <p>Whatever had brought them in, I didn’t sense that people were bored or confused or reluctant to be there. I was engaged and intrigued by the show and I sensed that my fellow audience members felt the same.</p> <p>I was not aware of any supporting activities or materials to accompany the performance. From the website it appears that the show is performing extensively across Europe, where I imagine it will be well received. It has a ‘European’ feel to it. No pre/post show talks or education work accompanying the tour are listed.</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 is now a bit more visible than it was when the Usher Hall hoarding was place!</p> <p>The performance was presented end-on in Traverse 1 and the sightlines were excellent. The stage is 10m x 8m.</p> <p>It is a good place to see dance – although I do worry that one day someone will fall down the stairs and hurt themselves, particularly as the hand-rail is currently very uneven.</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>A striking image was used to promote the show, featuring one of the dancers with a prosthetic arm jutting out of a bright orange jumper.</p> <p>There is tour information and a background paper on the Stammer Productions website.</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? 		<p>Yes/No</p>		<p>Yes/No</p>
	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
<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? 	Excellent			

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.