



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: Stellar Quines

Venue: The Tron

Title of Event: Everything I do is a Love Letter to Life

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

Play reading

Date of Visit: 13th November 2008

Overall Rating: Good

(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.)

Everything I do...formed part of Stellar Quines' excellent Rehearsal Room series of work-in-progress play readings. Everything I do...was a polished and creatively staged reading of a poetic text that was brimming full of ideas and imagery.

I felt that the event might have been more constructive for all involved if the text had been presented in a more edited form.

Name: Rebecca Robinson Date: 16/11/08
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>	Good	<p><i>Everything I do...</i> formed part of Stellar Quines <i>Rehearsal Room 14: Lifting the Lid</i> which comprised readings of three new plays on consecutive nights in the Changing House venue at the Tron. <i>Everything I do...</i> was, I thought, a disciplined and creatively staged and directed play reading. However, particularly as this was marketed as a work-in-progress – as a “snapshot of the play and a window into the process” - I did think that the reading might have benefited from a more edited version of the script. I thought that the script itself touched on some interesting ideas although I felt that the poetic language of the script was stronger than its thematic and dramatic content. I felt that the dichotomy between the ‘edgy’, stark staging and the lyrical, romantic text perhaps highlighted the more earnest moments in the latter resulting, sometimes; in comedy that I wasn’t sure was always deliberate.</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><i>The Rehearsal Room 14</i> was produced by Stellar Quines to encourage the development of new writing through commissioning writers to develop and showcase new work-in-progress. I thought the Rehearsal Room was an excellent concept – allowing playwrights to explore and develop work-in-progress with the benefit of audience feedback - with a different play reading staged on consecutive nights. As well as being beneficial for playwrights and potential producing companies, the event allows the opportunity for audiences to experience the process of theatre making.</p> <p><i>The Rehearsal Room 14</i> was staged in the Changing House venue at the Tron. The event complemented the Tron’s diverse winter programme and it was good to see the increase in use of the venue’s performance, rehearsal and exhibition spaces.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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 ¹below for guidance</p>	Competent	<p>The programme stated that the event aimed to provide “a snapshot of the play and a window into the process” allowing all involved to “participate in the shaping and forming of the piece”. As mentioned above, I felt that <i>Everything I Do...</i> – even though the performers did read from the script – was a very professional and polished performance. With a quite dense script and a running time of 1 hour and 40 minutes it did not feel like a “snapshot of the play” and thus, I felt, didn’t meet this aim. The programme also stated that the performance aimed to be “quite a serious attempt to explore why we bother with love at all”. For me, the play did not meet this aim.</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>	Good	<p>Performers: Nick Underwood, Alex Heatherington, Rebecca Green and Sally Hobson.</p> <p>I thought all the performers helped contribute to the concentrated, intense and even tone of the piece.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc</p>	N/a	
Theatre	<p>Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.</p>	Competent	<p>Script: Sally Hobson</p> <p>I felt that this very sweet and poetic text was brimming full of imagery and ideas and began with great promise. However, I did feel that the script – as presented – was overly long and complex and would have benefited from judicial editing. As such, I thought it was a fitting text to be mounted as part of the <i>Rehearsal Room</i> series.</p> <p>As the play progressed, I felt that the exploration of love did not seem to delve beyond a romantic notion of the idea. I found some of the scenarios, ideas and characters occasionally tended towards (perhaps deliberate?) cliché – e.g. the idea that ‘success’ doesn’t lead to fulfilment, that true fulfilment can only be found in romantic love, that ending relationships always leave some emotional residue. Although I liked the way that the dialogues were</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 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
			interspersed with extracts from a more linear narrative, I didn't find the content of this narrative substantial enough to deeply engage my attention. However, I thought that the unresolved tension at the heart of the piece – exploring on one hand the Buddhist/ theoretical physics concept that we are all interconnected and that there are forces of which we know nothing and, on the other, the truism that men and women are always physically separate – an idea worth developing. I also thought this idea became most fully realised at those moments towards the end when the themes of death and loss came to the fore.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	Director: Sally Hobson I thought that the relatively simple staging of this play reading was very effective - with the four performers seated mainly behind a table, occasionally standing to speak into a microphone, and with a table lamp illuminating each speaker in turn. Both the staging and the performances were disciplined and clear and technically well presented. Both the staging and tone of the performance reminded me of the Wooster group's work in the 1990s.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	The pre-recorded music seemed appropriate for the play.
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	As mentioned above, the simple staging – with the performers seated behind a table, facing the audience – worked, I thought, very effectively. The casual clothing seemed in keeping with the event. Lighting was simple and effective.
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</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>	Good	Stage Manager: Tracey Farrell The play reading was presented professionally from a technical point of view.
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p>		The Changing House was sold out with an audience covering a relatively broad demographic. The audience seemed engaged at the start although some did appear to get restless as the play progressed and two audience members left during the performance. There was warm applause at the end.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<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>		
All	<p>Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist’s talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>	Good	<p>Following the play reading, the audience were invited to take part in an informal discussion – accompanied by refreshments – in the bar. The majority of the audience accepted the invitation. As the play reading had run for longer than I had anticipated I wasn’t able to stay for long. But, in theory, I thought that the idea of getting audience feedback in this informal setting seemed like a good idea.</p>
All	<p>Outcomes of education activity – 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	I thought The Tron's Changing House was a very appropriate venue for the event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A double-sided, black and white, free programme provided basic information about the production, the event and the company. Flyers and posters were on display in the foyer.
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.	Rehearsal Room 14 seemed to be well advertised and I was aware of the event being publicised in various locations. Both Stellar Quines and The Tron advertised the event on their websites and all information was clear and easy to understand.
Ease of booking and payment	No problems
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Tron is relatively easy to find in Glasgow's city centre and is easy to access by all forms of public transport.
External signage and signposting	The Tron is well signposted externally.
Internal directional signage	Internal signage is fairly clear
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Seemed to be ok – although I wasn't aware of a lift.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Although I had been told by the box office that the play reading was an hour long, it actually lasted for 1 hour and 40 minutes - beginning at 8pm and finishing at 10.40 pm - with no interval. As mentioned above, I thought that this was too long for a play reading / work-in-progress. An hour would, I believe, have been more appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Front of house, catering and box office staff were all friendly and efficient.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The SAC were acknowledged on all publicity material that I was aware of.

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

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.