



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: Tron Changing House studio

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) Rehearsed reading of a performance piece

Date of Visit: 13th Nov 2008

Overall Rating: Competent

A very competent presentation of a script that has obviously been well worked on with some lyrical text but a lot of confusion of message. It is a multilayered piece with two main storylines interlinked. The result is a rather flat piece which seemed to leave the audience bemused rather than entertained or informed. The central aspiration to explore why we bother about love having not been much progressed.

(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.)

Sandy Maxwell Date:18/11/08_

Specialist Advisor

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	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.	competent	Four actors deliver a series largely of monologues with two stories: the plotline of a book and the break-down of a relationship are related. A prologue introducing the concept of the unified field theory sets the scene for seemingly unconnected events to be linked by string theory and the play finishes with the audience symbolically being connected to the actors by actual strings. What seems like a thoughtful construction of a play collapses as neither of the stories become grabbing or the links between them particularly interesting.
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.	good	Part of the Stellar Quines Rehearsal Room 14 Lifting the Lid series this was a very developed read performance of a work that has had some considerable level of development already.
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 ¹ below for guidance	competent	The programme claimed that the piece was “quite a serious attempt to explore why we bother with love at all and it has a surprising ending”. The piece presented was such a confusing multilayered production that any message or thoughts were almost completely obscured. Programme claimed that this was not about a finished piece of theatre. It is a snapshot of the play... At 90 minutes the read through must have included a large proportion of the play and did not encourage a further presentation as a full production.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	good	It was a very slick and polished performance for a rehearsed reading. The three actors and Sally Hobson performed the piece with a high level of confidence although at several points it was not clear if the cast were corpsing due to references in the script, bringing out a level of humour from the script or trying to mock the audience.
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.	competent	Extremely lyrical at times the script by Sally Hobson tries unsuccessfully to interrelate the romantic & slightly erotic love story from the book Silk with the aftermath of a man & a woman following the break-up of their long standing relation. Both stories do not come through successfully and the linkage is not well explored. .

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
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	good	The Man & Woman characters were well cast and showed some promise as believable and interesting characters but the two other parts seemed to loose focus at several times during the presentation.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	competent	
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	The four performers sat at a table facing the audience in a black box setting. Each performer controlled an individual desk light and a spotlighted mike stand to one side was occasionally used along with hand held mikes occasionally used to create a more intimate sound. In all a very theatrical presentation of a reading.
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	For a rehearsed reading it was a technically very smooth performance with pre-recorded dialogue inserts and lighting flawlessly presented.
All	<p>Audience</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>		A full house in the changing room space, two people walked out about an hour into the performance. The audience reaction at the end seemed slightly bemused but generally warm towards the performance, I thought that a large proportion of the audience were aware of previous work by the director and some of the other performers.
All	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.	competent	Post show the audience were invited into the old Tron bar and given a drink. Cast and Steller Quines staff circulated for discussion but by 10.15 when I had to leave there was no evidence of a group discussion or other activity being initiated.
All	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)?	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	Good intimate space for the reading/performance.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A basic photocopied programme gave bare bones of details about the reading and more details about Stellar Quines forthcoming show and the Rehearsal Room programme
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.	A5 card leaflet and good coverage in Tron & Stellar Quines website, brochures etc.
Ease of booking and payment	Over internet, easy
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	No problems
External signage and signposting	Good
Internal directional signage	Exits from auditorium not clear as people leaving during the show did not at first find the exit and tried to leave through the control area
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Good provision with disabled lift
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	7.30 start might have been preferable for such a long reading followed by reception event.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	FOH staff and stage management did not appear to co-ordinate well as late comers were still being seated during prologue of play. In general Tron staff were friendly and efficient.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Good on all print etc.

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.

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.