



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: **SUSPECT CULTURE / GRAEAE**

Venue: **BIRMINGHAM REP. THEATRE – The Door**

Title of Event: **STATIC**

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

Performance

Date of Visit: **Saturday 19th April (Matinee)**

Overall Rating (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.)

4 - Good

Name: **SANDY McROBBIE**

Date: **19/4/08**

Specialist Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please tick 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.	4	Static examines the reactions and interactions of 3 characters upon the death of a husband / brother / friend. Music, signing and texting are employed to explore both emotions and communication. The play manages to retain a narrative line to place these elements in a plausible context. Whilst the plot is relatively basic, the additional techniques used have produced an interesting piece of work.
All	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.	3	As a coproduction between Suspect Culture and Graeae in conjunction with the Tron, this production has been presented at a number of venues north and south of the border. It would appear to have succeeded in its aim of attracting a mixed audience who can appreciate the communication of the ideas and emotions in different ways and levels whilst still engaging with the playwrights various issues.
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	4	Subtitled a 'story of love, loss and compilation tapes', Static successfully explores these topics in a slightly unusual manner. Suspect Culture's use of physicality instead of always using dialogue, creates eclectic gaps into which the audience can create their own emotional understanding of the delicate subject of grief and unanswered prayer.
All	Performers - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	3 4 4 5 <hr/> = 4	'Chris' (Steven Webb) – As his character has no dialogue after the 1 st scene he is heavily reliant on signing and physically expressed emotion. 'Julia' (Jeni Draper) – Has perhaps the trickiest role to communicate her sense of loss (both of her brother and her relationship with God) again largely using signing & physical expression 'Martin' (Tom Thomasson) – Instantly and effectively establishes himself as the slightly awkward 'techno nerd'. 'Sarah' (Pauline Lockhart) – Quickly gains the viewers empathy as the grieving young woman, giving a very strong and creditworthy performance.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	4	Suspect Culture's often non naturalistic style introduces a physicality to the work. This combines with the tri thrust stage and the extensive use of signing to help explore the way emotions may be expressed without reference to language.

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	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	4	Dan Rebellato's script contains considerably more dialogue than that expressed using the spoken word. For a non sign reader it proves interesting post performance reading as it details all the signed text. This allows the reader to gauge how well they had interpreted the onstage dramas and emotions.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	4	The Director(s) have succeeded in keeping the pace going through the large number of scenes. This is important as this type of piece can have a tendency to drag and become disjointed if the extra physical and emotional elements of this production style are allowed to disrupt the plot line too extensively.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	5	Very suitable – by the clever adoption of an eclectic and varied compilation tape as an integral part of the plot it avoids becoming polarised by one music genre. This prevents any musical prejudices that the audience might have from interfering with their appreciation of 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.	4	The tri thrust staging helped emphasis the often different mind sets / worlds occupied by the 3 living characters as the play progresses. These platforms are bridged by the giant speakers – music often forming the link between the performers situations.
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>	<p>5</p> <p>4</p> <p>unknown</p> <hr/> <p>= 4</p>	<p>The technical presentation and cueing was largely seamless – as it should be by this stage of a tour!</p> <p>The levels for both sound and lighting were appropriate to the venue and the production.</p> <p>The lighting was professional – tasteful, layered and interesting without dominating the proceedings.</p> <p>The use of signing and texting was much more involved in the drama than perhaps usual, although this remained appropriate for non users. The movement and expression become part of the unfolding drama.</p> <p>No experience of associated educational events.</p>
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>		<p>There was about a 60% house for this matinee performance. The audience remained attentive and the production was well received. A number of groups of deaf teenagers and adults attended.</p> <p>No experience of associated educational events.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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.	unknown	No experience of associated educational events.
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)?	unknown	No experience of associated educational events.

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	Very suitable. Intimate setting, although just large enough to avoid 'intrusive' technology.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Good range of material including a script / program at a reasonable price (£3.00). A 'touch tour' model of the set was also readily available.
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.	Both Birmingham Rep. and Suspect Culture's websites provided useful and helpful information. Didn't have a chance to check if the production had been highlighted to specialist organisations. External publicity might have been more extensive.
Ease of booking and payment	Initial problem with payment on website, but quickly sorted with one phone call.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	City centre location – easy for buses and 10 minutes walk from the station. Parking available locally although costly.
External signage and signposting	Signage for venue excellent. Promotional signage promoting production very limited on venue exterior.
Internal directional signage	Very good
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Very adequate, although as is usual for this type of studio auditorium the wheelchair positions are front row – some users find this intimidating.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	5 minute delay in going up due to late arrivals. At 85 minutes (no interval), the length of the production was as long as necessary without overstaying its welcome!
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Again excellent. Very friendly and efficient box office, ushers and catering staff.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC funding noted on all printed material available.

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.