



## 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: Theatre Babel**

**Venue: The Citizens**

**Title of Event: Educating Agnes**

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

**Date of Visit: 3/05/08**

**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.)*

**Strengths:** *Educating Agnes* was a highly entertaining and engaging production, which marked another highly fruitful collaboration between Liz Lochhead and Theatre Babel.

**Weakness:** As well as appearing to limit the playing space, I felt that the set design was too static and, although it did not detract from my enjoyment of the production, neither did it add to it.

Name: Rebecca Robinson Date: 4 / 5 / 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	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.	Good	<i>Educating Agnes</i> was an entertaining and enjoyable production full of vitality and wit. The production was well cast and, overall, had high production values. The production marked another fruitful collaboration between Liz Lochhead and Theatre Babel and added to Lochhead's already very well established reputation for successful adaptations of Moliere's work.
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	<i>Educating Agnes</i> complemented the Citizen's recent staging of the other European classics <i>Six Characters</i> and <i>Waiting for Godot</i> . It was a welcome addition to the Citizen's forthcoming programme, which generally seems weighted towards productions targeted at a younger audience. I couldn't find any information about the production on Theatre Babel's website.
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	Good	Babel states that the company's aim is to "work to liberate some of the world's greatest plays, igniting the imagination of artists to explore the truth and release the extraordinary in classic myths and dramas". They also state that they intend to produce work that is "intrinsically reflective of and responsive to Scottish culture" (programme notes). <i>Educating Agnes</i> met these aims by creating a dynamic and accessible adaptation of this classic play, which had particular resonance for a contemporary Scottish audience.
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	<i>Educating Agnes</i> featured an excellent ensemble of actors all of whom appeared to relish the opportunity of delivering such a well-constructed text. All performers were physically and vocally strong. Kevin McMonagle had perfect comic timing and was irresistibly likeable as the vain and foolish Arnolphe. Anneika Rose shone as Agnes bringing a convincing innocent energy to the part.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/a	

<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.

<b>Artform</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Excellent	Liz Lochhead’s adaptation of Moliere’s <i>School for Wives</i> captured the spirit and essence of the original version whilst also infusing it with a very particular Scottish spirit and humour. Lochhead’s pacy adaptation for six actors humorously transposed Moliere’s rhyming couplets into a Scottish vernacular in a dialogue that exuded a generous warmth and wit.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	(Director- Graham McLaren). The production was very well cast and a good rapport had been created between the actors. The production was staged with clarity although, as mentioned below, I felt that the set design was limiting. The production was well paced and encapsulated the bawdy irreverence of the script with a refreshing lack of preciousness (e.g. the use of the Tesco’s plastic bags). Although the first scene between Arnolphe and Chrysalde felt a bit flat, it allowed the welcome, and effective, opportunity for the audience to adjust to the rhythms and language of the text.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	N/a	
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 set (designed by Graham McLaren & Robin Peoples) comprised a large curtain/ flat painted with a classic image of a reclining nude. Although I appreciated the initial impression of the set, I felt that the production could have benefited from a scene change. As well as appearing to limit the playing space, I felt that the set design was too static and, although it did not detract from my enjoyment of the production, neither did it add to it. The period costumes complemented the production, with Agnes’ striking blue dress a particularly bold and effective choice. Though the set design didn’t allow much opportunity for inventive lighting, Kai Fischer’s lighting design was simple and perfectly 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	The production was presented professionally from a technical point of view. Stage Manager - Yvonne Buskie/ Assistant Stage Manager – Kate Frost.

<b>Artform</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
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>The Citizens main house appeared to be almost full on this final, Saturday night performance there. Though the majority of the audience appeared to be in the over forty age-range, there were some younger audience members. There was much laughter throughout the production and very warm applause and cheering at the end, with the cast recalled a few times for appreciative encores.</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?*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Suitability of the venue for the event	The Citizens seemed a very appropriate venue for the performance.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	I wasn't aware of any posters at the venue. There were some flyers for the show on display at the box office. The programme, costing £3.50, included a copy of the script. The programme/ book was very professionally produced and contained some interesting information. I felt that the cost might have been prohibitive for some people and was disappointed that there wasn't a more affordable programme 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.	The production seemed to be well advertised in the local media. I thought that the rather posed and serious image used for publicity material didn't wholly represent the more accessible and bawdy flavour of the actual production. Although Theatre Babel have an excellent – elegant and easy to navigate - website I couldn't find any information about this production on it. The production was advertised on The Citizens website.
Ease of booking and payment	I had no problem booking tickets online and picking them up from the box office.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Citizens is easy to access by public transport (bus and underground) and has a dedicated car park.
External signage and signposting	The Citizens is very clearly signposted externally, although I could not see the production poster on the large billboards outside the theatre.
Internal directional signage	Internally, the theatre is well resourced with many ushers.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Seemed to be ok – there is an electric door to the foyer and ramps.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The production, which started at 7.30pm, lasted for two hours, including a 15 minute interval. This seemed to be an appropriate start and end time for the audience.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Box office and front of house staff all seemed to be friendly and efficient.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	I was not aware of acknowledgment of SAC funding in the programme/ script.

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<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 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.