



Scottish Arts Council

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:	Citizens' Theatre
Title of Event:	Educating Agnes
Type of Event:	performance
Date of Visit:	25/04/2008
Overall Rating:	Good While the play is not especially intellectually engaging, it worked well as high quality entertainment with strong, assured performances from all of the cast.
Name: Jaine Lumsden	Date: 19/05/2008
Scottish Arts Council Officer	

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	This was accessible, high quality entertainment that was professionally presented in all aspects of its production. Theatre Babel and Liz Lochhead have worked together before and this was another successful partnership. Theatre Babel's work is consistently good or excellent. While the visual/design elements of this piece were good, they were not as strong as in some previous Theatre Babel productions.
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	Artist-led; company commissioned new version from playwright.
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	Good	The programme says that Theatre Babel'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" and that they aim to produce work that is "intrinsically reflective of and responsive to Scottish culture." Lochhead's script made obvious reference to contemporary Scotland through its language and the production overall was accessible and entertaining.
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	Strong performances from all of the cast, who all displayed a good sense of comic timing. Lewis Howden's and Maureen Carr's very funny portrayals of the inept servants almost threatened to steal the show at times. As is often the case, the star crossed-lovers were essentially the least interesting characters – but the "hero" responded well to the humour in his part because of his gullibility. Kevin McMonagle as Arnolphe had a slightly unconvincing start, but quickly captured the audience's attention. (This may be because the first scene was, compared to the rest of the play, a little unengaging.)

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
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		N/A see under direction
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	New version of Moliere's <i>School For Wives</i> by Liz Lochhead. This was at times witty, course, humorous and consistently entertaining. Her use of Scottish language brought a new dimension to the script, which also helped to engage the audience.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	By Graham McLaren. There were some inspired scenes and devices, for example the use of plastic bags, which were very entertaining perhaps because they were unexpected. Within the constraints of the set (see below) the space was used well. McLaren kept a tight rein on the cast which meant that none of the more ridiculous scenes over-ran, maintaining an appropriately brisk pace throughout. The opening felt a little flat, although it was necessary to set the scene for the rest of the play.
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	Designed by Graham McLaren & Robin Peoples. The set was dominated by a picture of a nude woman superimposed onto the flat structure which had the doors and windows necessary for the action. This image was entirely appropriate, but after a while when it became apparent that the whole piece was going to be played on the same set it became a little distracting. The costumes were vaguely period with some slightly strange modern touches, which reflected the way McLaren directed the piece. The lighting by Kai Fischer was unobtrusive and worked with the set on the whole, though a couple of times it seemed as if performers were out of their lights. Possibly this was performer error?
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>	Competent	Professionally presented

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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>		Stalls c. 85% full? (Don't think there were many, if any, people in the circle?) Good reaction, people audibly enjoyed the humour.
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>		Not aware of any
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	Appropriate
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Outside and inside building, programmes which include the script and notes from the director at £3.50.
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.	Citizens' brochure and website, listings, not aware of anything else.
Ease of booking and payment	Fine, by phone. On arrival it transpired my ticket had been booked for the wrong night, but the box office sorted this out with no fuss.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	On bus route, near tube
External signage and signposting	Fine
Internal directional signage	Fine
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Fine – ramps from back of foyer to auditorium.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Seemed appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Friendly
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	No acknowledgement on programme (though funded by SAC.) Acknowledged on poster outside.

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.