



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 Cryptic
Venue:	RSAMD
Title of Event:	Optical Identity
Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	Performance
Date of Visit:	Friday 9 November 2007
Overall Rating:	3-4
<i>(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.)</i>	
<p>This was an ambitious production to enhance the sensual presentation and experience of musical performance. The performance by the T'ang Quartet was outstanding and the choice of all-contemporary music interesting and varied. While some elements of the design, lighting and visuals were beautiful and enhanced the compositions, a balance was not always struck – often making it difficult to engage and focus on the music itself.</p>	
Name: Tamsin Mendelsohn	Date: 17 December 2007
Specialist Advisor	Scottish Arts Council Officer <i>Please circle the relevant title</i>

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>	4	<p>As per the website and programme, the show was billed as a <i>'work that combines chamber music repertoire with new music and visuals; creating music to be looked at... not just listened to'</i> – and exploring the concept of synaesthesia (intermingling of the senses), particularly through use of technology in the visual presentation of music.</p> <p>This was an interesting premise, which resulted in an uninterrupted presentation of four contemporary chamber works, performed by string quartet, interacting with lighting, stage design, electro-acoustic sound, projected visuals and movement.</p> <p>The production was very ambitious, with a range of contemporary designers commissioned to create each of the elements towards a finally integrated whole to engage the wider senses of the audience. Overall, I felt that the different elements of the production were more successful in some areas than others.</p> <p>I did see this work during the Edinburgh International Festival when the visual technology did not work. The live visuals in this performance had been changed to set play. The quality of musical performance remained equally high. I found the smaller stage and auditorium of the RSAMD created a better platform for intimate and focused engagement with the complex production.</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>		<p>As explained in the programme notes, the work came out of Cathie Boyd's research as a NESTA fellow, which took her to Singapore where she met the T'ang Quartet. The result was this co-production of <i>Optical Identity</i> – commissioned by the Singapore Arts Festival - which very much came across as an equal partnership exploring this extended and enhanced presentation of musical performance.</p>
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>	3-4	<p>The idea of synaesthesia was clearly communicated in the programme, preparing the audience for the show.</p> <p>As outlined earlier, I found some of the elements of the production more successful than others in matching the aims.</p> <p>The strongest quality of the show lay at its heart – the music – and this was particularly due to the superb musical and performance skills, and courage of the T'ang Quartet – who were ideal partners for undertaking such a programme – as well as the choice of pieces. I enjoyed all of the compositions</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
			<p>and in general experienced the uninterrupted presentation as a satisfying whole. The 'liberation' of the performers from the musical scores and traditional seated performance seemed to enable the musicians to explore the music more deeply, which I think came across well to the audience.</p> <p>The costume designs were very original, suited the performers and added an edge to the show. The use of spotlight and coloured lighting was atmospheric and I found that the changes in lighting often ideally matched a change in mood or dynamic of the music. (At times I was very reliant on lighting to indicate the move to the next piece as it was not possible to refer to the programme in the darkened auditorium). Similarly the different use of space on stage, some of the physical movement by the performers and some of the projections of hands playing instruments, or the 'cello screen double' helped reinforce different ideas, feelings, dynamics in the music, and even the physicality of playing an instrument.</p> <p>However, I found that often, other elements designed to enhance the performance did not clearly relate to the music and were in danger of drowning or distracting from the musical experience. I felt that this was demanding on an audience listening to an all-contemporary and probably unfamiliar musical programme.</p> <p>This included the first piece where players were 'hidden' behind the set design (it was difficult to see what was going on and focus on the music), some of the physical movement and choreography of the players, some of the visual projections of shapes that turned out to be players body parts (shoulders, backs, elbows etc), random visual images and some moving light projections.</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>	5	<p>The T'ang Quartet was world class. They demonstrated excellent technical ability – playing a range of challenging and diverse contemporary pieces (including a new commission) to the highest standard and by memory – as well as being fascinating to watch in their own engagement in the music, communication with each other, and courage to take a musical performance into the broader realm of theatre production and new technology.</p> <p>I would say that the main excitement and dynamics of the show lay in listening and watching them perform and that this could have been used to fuller effect.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	2-4	<p>The different use of stage space to enhance different moods and dynamics of pieces or movements was very effective, and refreshing from 'normal' static concert performances where players remain seated.</p> <p>However, I found that some of the choreographed movement around the stage was at times distracting and looked clumsy.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.		
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.		
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.		
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>	3-4	The quality of lighting and visuals were good - although as outlined above, were of mixed success to fulfilling the aims and concept of the production.
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 were c.100 audience members – quite a number seemed to be between 25-45 – I noticed that several people had come through Dada events subscriptions.</p> <p>In general the response to the show seemed to be positive, with lots of debate outside in the bar.</p>
All	Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please	3	A video showing the creative process of making the show was placed outside the auditorium door – although the sound was not turned on.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	indicate age-groups targeted.		
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>		

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	The smaller venue and auditorium were good for encouraging focus on such a complex production.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Programmes were available – the design was very appealing with good photographs of the production – which gave a good idea of what to expect.
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.	Good pre-publicity in the List and on the company's website – although it was difficult to find the start time – I had to look at the RSAMD website to find this.
Ease of booking and payment	I bought a ticket at the box office without any difficulty.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	This is a well-known venue in Glasgow, very close to the Royal Concert Hall.
External signage and signposting	Clear.
Internal directional signage	This was quite clear, although larger signs would be helpful. Quite a number of people were confused going into the theatre as there were no ushers inside the auditorium directing people to seats.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	From the ground floor there are lifts which also access the auditorium.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	8.00 – 9.30pm was a good length for one set, and appropriate for this production which needed further time to reflect on.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Generally good – although see comment above re lack of ushers in the auditorium.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Clearly in the programme.

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.

Response due 22 January 2008