



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: Krazy Kat TC

Venue: Theatre Workshop, Edinburgh in main theatre

Title of Event: Growing... Growing... Gone

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

Performance as part of Degenerate4 festival on Edinburgh Fringe

Date of Visit: Aug 16th 2007 11am performance

Overall Rating: Competent

(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.)

As there were few children present in the target age range this was not an ideal performance to evaluate. The show was well constructed and the actors worked hard to achieve a rapport but on the whole there was nothing to make the performance stand out. The use of BSL was well integrated into the performance and had there been more of the target audience (3-7 years) present (either familiar or not with signing) this might have been further explored.

Name: ___Sandy Maxwell___ Date:21/_/08/_/2007_

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	The basic performance was a retelling of Jack & the beanstalk story by two "friends" with some basic slight of hand magic, a few puppets & props. Integration of British Sign Language to tell the story and introduce BSL to non users was the only thing that differentiated it from many children's performers. For this performance the other problems (see success section below) did not allow this element to be used to it's full potential resulting in a fairly average piece of children's entertainment.
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.	competent	This was part of Theatre Workshop's disability multi-arts festival, one of two events for children and targeted at the 3-7 ages range. It was programmed for 16 th to 18 th August Thur, Fri, Sat at 11am after Edinburgh schools had gone back on the 15 th . At the performance I was at there were no school groups so I'm not sure where the venue intended to get an audience in the advertised 3-7 age range.
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	Many of the small number of children present were at the lower end of the age range (or below) so I think the use of BSL did not greatly contribute to their appreciation of the performance. The Crazy Kat website mission statement emphasises their desire to be child-centred empowering a young audience and using play to stimulate imagination. In general the play achieved this as a mixture of entertainment & education.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your	good	Two likeable male performers engaged the audience of adults & children well without being patronising. They switched well from interacting with each other to tell a story and addressing the audience. The magic and

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
	comments.		puppet handling was good.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	na	The production is designed to be very flexible, freestanding set that would work in any non theatre space so there was not a lot of use of the relatively large stage at Theatre Workshop
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	na	
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	good	The performance started with some banter to engage the actors with the audience followed by the performance of the story. The pace was good and the use of BSL felt natural in the show. The magic & creation of puppets out of everyday objects was smoothly executed and a good balance of techniques kept the story moving on and interesting. Two sections of audience members on stage were possibly shortened as the children were 3.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	competent	Background music to set the scene was well used.
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 simple set of a back screen, a couple of podia and a stand for the cassette player is suitable for touring a quick getin/out of non theatre venues. Costumes & props were well made, colourful and suitable for the show.
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc). Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang	competent	A basic lighting cover was used with house lights on the audience for interaction sections. A coomber cassette amp onstage supplied the music and was operated by the actors, during the performance the music was lost and the cassette needed to be re-cued while the other actor covered well with some improvisations.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.		
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>		At the start there was 27 in the audience adults slightly outnumbering children who were almost all 3 years old or less. About ten minutes into the show another ten people joined the audience. The audience went along with the interaction learning a few BSL signs. While a few of the children were enthralled by the performance others were obviously too young for the performance and restless throughout.
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.	na	None obviously available
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)?	na	

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	Given the size & target range of the audience a smaller auditorium where the audience were closer to the performers would have been more

Criteria	Comment
	appropriate. Half of the front row of the seats was retracted further distancing them. The front of house area of Theatre Workshop is very child friendly.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There was a foyer display for all the shows in degenerate4 largely based on the pages from the TW brochure.
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.	There were no obvious posters present either inside or outside the venue but given it was in the middle of the Fringe it was difficult to assess. A5 leaflets from the company for the show were available in the foyer but had not been overprinted with performance details. The leaflet was explanatory featuring a pair of hands signing representing the giant and the two actors. The leaflet was single sided so slightly crowded with text.
Ease of booking and payment	A very friendly box-office took a telephone booking and recommended reserving rather than a credit card booking in order to save the booking fee! FOH were friendly on collection.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Well established venue close to city centre.
External signage and signposting	clearly signposted inside & out.
Internal directional signage	clearly signposted inside & out.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Very disability aware venue with a few limitations due to an elderly building.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	50 minutes show suitable for the age range intended but possibly overlong for the under 3 audience that was present.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very good, there was no pre show call in the café but this was probably an oversight due to small audience

Criteria	Comment
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC clearly acknowledged in TW brochure.

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.

The piece is an Arts Council funded work which was instrumental in securing further funding from ACE. It was disheartening to have this performance labelled as 'Competent', as in reading the full report there seems much more to recommend it.

As an Arts Council funded company currently in receipt of project funding until the end of 2008 and working in a new, hybrid form of Sign Language Arts, evaluation is important. However, the criteria for evaluation must be approached with relevant knowledge and information.

This report brings up issues that I am often dealing with in evaluations. The first is a lack of understanding of the importance of sign and kinetic description to early years children, and the second a mis-conception of the reasons for childrens movement displacements during performances.

In the section labelled 'Vision' it is stated that the use of Sign Language (which importantly is not only BSL, but SSE and a theatrical development that I am continuing to devise) was the only thing that differentiated the piece from the work of others. This does not square with our artistic reputation, nor with the series of detailed reports on the content, structures, design and visual impact of the companies work commissioned by The Arts Council of England.

In the section 'Success' the author thinks that the BSL (for that read Sign Language as described above) did not greatly contribute to the childrens appreciation of the performance. In disagreeing most strongly with this observation, it would be interesting to know the authors background in Child Psychology, Early Years studies, and training in

Sign Languages both British and International. What could this statement be founded on, as it flies in the face of my studies and experience in the Early Years field? It is an awkward situation when one perceives personal opinion masquerading as fact, but I challenge that statement most robustly.

Further: under the section 'Audience' the author states that the younger children were restless throughout. This suggests disengagement, and was simply not the case. Displacement movements, small noises, comments to carer etc. do not point to disengagement, on the contrary it frequently signifies that the child has a confidence in their patterns of behavior being reinforced by the setting and accessibility of the given performance.

In closing, even with a lack of relevant specialist knowledge, and with so many of the descriptions in the report being positive i.e well constructed, pace was good, smoothly executed, a good balance of techniques, good, well used...etc, why then simply a grudging 'Competent'? Surely there is much more to appreciate in my work!

Any artistic discussion is of paramount importance; however I would recommend further staff training on the points I've raised in order to allow for deeper understanding of some complex issues.

Please can you attach a copy of this reply to the original evaluation report, for any future reference which may be necessitated by applications for funding.

Kinny Gardner
Artistic Director
The Crazy Kat Theatre Company

