



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: Deafinitely Theatre**

**Venue: THEATRE WORKSHOP**

**Title of Event: Playing God**

**Type of Event: Performance**

**Date of Visit: 16/08/07**

**Overall Rating: GOOD**

“Is Deafness something that should be fixed?” This is the question asked in this powerful, witty and often moving exploration of deaf politics and the validity and uniqueness of deaf culture. It tackles red hot issues such as that surrounding cochlea implants. The show is perfectly accessible to both deaf and hearing audiences without compromising either. A fine contribution to Theatre Workshop’s important Degenerate4 festival

Name: Stewart Ennis  
Specialist Advisor

Date : 18/08/07

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	The shows themes, the validity and uniqueness of hearing culture are explored through the current hot issue of the implications of cochlea implants in deaf children. Played out as a domestic drama, this piece seemed rather too didactic while at other times this in itself seemed part of a satirical and stylistic device; The over all effect though was that of an incredibly moving, funny and dynamic, ethical debate; a culture clash between two sets of parents struggling to find out what it means to "want the best" for their child. A particularly effective and memorable moment was the blurred video image of deaf children at play, that opened the show, being replayed in sharp focus as the show closed.
	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.	Excellent	Deafinitely Theatre make a perfect contribution to Theatre Workshop's Degenerate4 festival. This festival offers a platform to national and international disabled artists. In the Theatre Workshop brochure it states that one of Degenerate4's aims is to "challenge outdated stereotypes". This show certainly fits the bill and serves a wider audience.
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	Excellent	"Is Deafness something that should be fixed"? The brochure states that this show is "accessible to both deaf and hearing" . It achieves this perfectly without compromising either.  Deafinitely successfully fulfil their policy of creating <i>deaf led theatre</i> .
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	Actors (unnamed as there was no programme). I was led to web site but the performers names are not listed there either). All five performers worked well individually and as an ensemble. Text was a mixture of BSL and spoken text. All performed to good professional standard.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Good	Use of occasional chorus work was well executed and appropriate.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	The style of the dialogue shifted. Sometimes it was quite naturalistic, didactic even; and at others a more heightened style was adopted that approached parody (particularly those scenes involving the audiologist). This was well reflected in the actors' performances. The script was peppered

<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.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			with good humour and perhaps this together with the mix of styles was responsible for us being off guard when it delivered its powerful emotional punch.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	(Director?) The direction had a clarity and simplicity that seemed appropriate to this piece. The combination of BSL and spoken word worked well, benefiting from this uncluttered approach.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	(No programme/no credit) The minimal piano based electronic score, though sporadic, worked well adding atmosphere. Being a deaf-led piece, it seemed appropriate that the music never felt crucial to a clear understanding of the text.
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	(Designer?) Design was minimal and effective. Costumes were modern day dress and appropriate. Particularly effective was a simple back projection of wall paper suggesting a domestic setting and of an anatomical diagram of the ear. It should be said that being a festival show, turnaround/set up times are very tight.
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	All audio visual cues seemed to operate to a good professional standard.
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>	<p>Good</p> <p>N/A</p>	Main theatre was little over third full. The audience reaction was enthusiastic.
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.	N/A	

<b>Artform</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
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)?	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	Theatre Workshop theatre suited this production very well.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Theatre Workshop brochure gave brief but accurate synopsis of show as well as other shows included in the Degenrate4 festival. Photo/poster display visible in foyer. 1Deafinitely Theatre had no company programme offering details on any member of its creative team creative team.
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.	Theatre Workshop website offers useful information on venue programme and is easy to navigate. Flyers and posters were distributed around Edinburgh and brochures available from variety of sources. Admittedly difficult to achieve high visibility of printed matter during Edinburgh Festival.
Ease of booking and payment	Telephone booking was quite straightforward.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Theatre Workshop is quite central and easily reached by local bus.
External signage and signposting	Easy to find and highly visible from street.
Internal directional signage	Easy to negotiate and good assistance offered by excellent front of house staff.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Priority given to disabled users.. Hands on assistance from front of house staff. Good disabled access to all facilities.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The show ran for 90m and this seemed quite appropriate as did the starting time of 5.30pm, allowing younger audience members to attend.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Generally front of house and cafe staff were very friendly and efficient.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	SAC logo visible on all Theatre Workshop printed material.

<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.