



## 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 Workshop

**Venue:** The Tramway

**Title of Event:** Marat Sade

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

**Date of Visit:** 25<sup>th</sup> October 2008

**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.)*

**There were many powerful elements in this ambitious production of Marat Sade – including the impressive set, dynamic live music and mosaic of projected iconographic images. However, overall, I felt that the production failed to elucidate the themes and ideas of the play – and, in fact, confused matters by adding extra layers to an already multi layered and complex text.**

Name: Rebecca Robinson Date: 25/10/08

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.	Competent	This highly ambitious, technically complex and, without doubt, timely production of <i>Marat Sade</i> created an arresting audio-visual spectacle - complete with a live six-piece band, state-of-the-art video projections and flamboyant set and costumes. As such, I thought the production worked as an impressive piece of installation art that captured some of the spirit – if not the detail - of the original play. However, I felt that the production failed to elucidate the themes and ideas of the play – and, in fact, confused matters by adding extra layers to an already multi layered and complex text. It seemed that the focus of the production was directed towards the spectacle rather than the text resulting in uneven performances and lack of clarity. Like <i>Endgame</i> - the other most recent Theatre Workshop production that I have seen - <i>Marat Sade</i> had some strong, particularly visual, elements. However, I felt that neither production appeared to truly seek to find a bridge to communicate with me as an audience member. This resulted in my feeling emotionally and intellectually detached from the production.
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>Marat Sade</i> was produced by Theatre Workshop and directed by Theatre Workshop's Artistic Director, Robert Rae. The production formed part of a very full and varied winter programme of performance at Tramway, which included work by Forced Entertainment, the NTS, Fish and Game and Ankur.
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	Poor	As discussed in more detail above, I felt that the production failed to clearly communicate the artistic themes. Without having prior knowledge of the play, I think audiences would have struggled to make sense of it. As such, Rae's aims – for e.g. a “desire to draw people back into serious political debate” / “I hope referencing '68 elucidates the argument of the play” – were not, I felt, met.

<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
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>	Competent	<p>The cast comprised both professional and non-professional actors – with the non-professional actors mainly cast in the non-speaking roles. Acting was very variable throughout and I felt, partly because of the staging and the impressive but dominating set and video projections, it was difficult to follow the text.</p> <p>Ysy Collier had a mesmerising quality of both strength and innocence as Charlotte Corday.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Competent	<p>Choreographer – Jane Howie</p> <p>The short choreographed sequences worked well.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	<p>This was an un-adapted version of Pete Weiss original 1964 ‘classic’ play <i>The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade</i>.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Competent	<p>As mentioned, this was a highly ambitious production both in its scale and in its aims. I thought that the overall aesthetic of the production and the technical aspects were very well managed. Casting seemed mainly appropriate although, as mentioned, there were some uneven performances and it was often hard to catch what was being said (partly due to visual overload).</p> <p>I found the paralleling of the two ‘people’s revolutions’ (the 18<sup>th</sup> century French revolution and the 1968 student’s revolts) confusing, as the array of classic and contemporary iconic revolutionary imagery encouraged an attempt to make intellectual connections that diverted my focus from the actual play.</p> <p>Although the audience were invited to promenade, the production was, in fact, directed towards those audience members who were seated in the limited seating bank. Those audience members who did accept the invitation to ‘promenade’ became trapped by the set, had poor sightlines and were often herded by the ushers when the set needed rearranged.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Excellent	<p>Musical Director – Mikey Cameron</p> <p>Soundscapes – Ronnie McConnell</p> <p>The live music from the six-piece band provided an energy and momentum to the production. The finale, in particular, helped to create a sense of the wild anarchy that the play demands.</p>
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.	Excellent	<p>Set – Gordon Davidson</p> <p>Lighting Designer – George Tarbuck</p> <p>Video Artist – John McGeoch</p> <p>Costume Designer – Kenny Miller</p> <p>The impressive and adaptable set comprised a large raised stage around which the audience could in theory promenade. This was surrounded on three sides by a semi-enclosed playing area that could be</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>imagined as an asylum/ prison. Above this, on three sides, iconic and/ or striking images were projected. Along with the often-psychedelic lighting, the set itself created a fascinating visual installation. I thought that the costumes (all in reds, black and cream) also helped to create an overall arresting aesthetic to the production.</p>
All	<p><b>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</b></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>	Excellent	<p>Stage Manager – Mike Offland Captioning Operator – Aaron Wood</p> <p>This was a technically complex production that combined video projection, amplified sound, captioning and a mobile set. All these elements worked smoothly and without any noticeable hitch.</p>
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 audience of approximately 150 people covered a relatively broad demographic. Audience members were attentive throughout. There was no curtain call at the end so limited applause.</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>	Good	<p>The production was accompanied by signing interpreters – some of which was integrated into the performance.</p>
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 Tramway seemed an appropriate venue for the event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There were posters on display and programmes available in the foyer. The professionally produced programme was filled with an array of well-researched information about the play etc as well as biogs of company members.
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 was well advertised in the local and national press. The production was advertised on the Tramway's website. All information was clear and easy to understand. I could not find any information about the production on Theatre Workshop's own website – perhaps because the production was not playing at that venue.
Ease of booking and payment	No problem.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Tramway is near to several bus routes and is close to a railway station.
External signage and signposting	The Tramway is well signposted externally.
Internal directional signage	Internal directional signage is fairly clear and there were a number of ushers directing audience members. There did, however, seem to be some lack of clarity between ushers regarding the promenade form of the performance – with some ushers encouraging the audience to take seats and others suggesting that seats were reserved for those with physical disabilities.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Seemed to be ok.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The production ran at approximately 3 hours with one interval. This relatively lengthy running time was necessary in order to remain faithful to the original text.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Front of house, catering and box office staff were, mainly, all friendly and efficient.

Criteria	Comment
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	The SAC was acknowledged in all publicity material that I was aware of.

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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.