



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:	Assembly Rooms
Title of Event:	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.
Type of Event:	Performance
Date of Visit:	14.11.2008
Overall Rating:	Competent - <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>The Marat/Sade was an ambitious, large scale production involving professionals and community volunteers, of mixed physical ability / disability, in performance and production. Marat/Sade had a strong, though not clear, artistic vision using a complex, well designed set, strong visual projections and good live music. The production was technically well put together, but the execution of the concept in the overall performance and the direction of individual performances was weak with the result that audience engagement was lacking. The communication of artistic vision and ‘meaning’ of the production was not clear. Though M/S was given a strong theatrical setting, the production lacked strong theatrical <i>relationships</i> between actors and between performers and audience. The text remained a polemic dialogue unaided by an engaging theatrical experience. In terms of inclusivity and community involvement the performance was successful. The communication of artistic vision and engagement of audience in a theatrical experience was less successful.</p>	
Name:	Tim Licata
	Specialist Advisor
Date:	14 / 11 / 2008
	<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	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	I felt this was an impressive production in terms of scale, and the staging of a complex script, technically well fleshed out. The artistic vision and imagination remained competent; 'routine rather than especially interesting'. The polemics in the play remain relevant today, but the staging and theatrical devices (skills in execution) used did not succeed to make the polemics theatrically interesting or more particularly engaging. I have not previously seen the company's work.
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 by Theatre Workshop. Not part of a festival. The social themes in the play are philosophically still very relevant to today's society. The ideas presented, debate and social satires offered, still relevant to contemporary society. This was a very good programming choice as a vehicle for inclusivity and community involvement – both in terms of scale, numbers needed to achieve the artistic vision and as a platform for expression of the play's social themes and contemporary issues of inclusivity / perception of disabled and non-disabled people.
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	Competent	Theatre Workshop outlines good specific goals for their projects. These are comprised of both social and artistic goals, which are often bound together. The goals listed below are from the programme and my comments refer to this specific production of M/S. Their mission seeks to (paraphrased): ...be inclusive, enabling people from diff. backgrounds, cultures and belief systems to work together. - <i>Good, well fulfilled.</i> ...discuss difficult themes and not shy away from controversy and debate. – <i>Competent (themes in M / S are relevant but not particularly difficult. Opportunities were missed to theatrically confront perceptions of 'disabled' bodies by non-disabled people in relation to images in text and on stage).</i> ...provide a forum for new writers and actors...to develop, improve and learn. - <i>Good, well fulfilled in terms of actors and community involvement – disable and non-disabled.</i> ...provide a space in which disabled and non-disabled actors can work together. - <i>Good, well fulfilled.</i> ...to provide a voice for the voiceless, a place of expression for the dispossessed, ...present a comprehensive study of real life with all its heterogeneity and diversity. - <i>Competent, not particularly met in this project. Diversity was</i>

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><i>presented, but my impression was that the actors, as in many productions, were more at the disposal of the production vision than given their own voice. To engage, enrage and encourage audiences to see the modern world in different ways. - Competent, audience was not particularly engaged, did not appear to have a specifically strong reaction. Play did present viewpoints to encourage audience to see modern world in a different light, though I didn't feel this was particularly successful.</i></p> <p>In terms of inclusivity, community involvement and providing access for participation in artistic activity to a wide variety of participants, M/S was successful. In terms of artistic achievement the production was less successful. (comments below)</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>	Good	<p>The cast included professional performers and a supporting cast of community volunteers. The professional and community cast included actors of mixed abilities / disabilities.</p> <p>Technical standards of the professional cast were Good. Performance skills and ability to communicate and engage were less successful, but I felt this had more to do with direction than performer's abilities/standard.</p> <p>Nabil Shaban and Sophie Partridge stood out as quite naturally focused and engaging performers. Andrew McLay as Marat is also a strong performer, vocally strong and passionate.</p> <p>It was nice to see an actress, Marsaili Farquhar, making a debut in the professional company having been part of a community company on a previous TW production.</p> <p>It was evident that much work and commitment was necessary to successfully involve a large number of community participants. The community cast involved people with a wide range of performing skills who received training during rehearsals for this production. This participatory aspect was very successful. As overall, more attention more attention could have been given to all performers to successfully engage the audience.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Competent	<p>The scale of this production, particularly using a large community cast, was impressive. Logistically, staging and balancing the stage while incorporating this many people was an achievement. Good use was made of the quite grand stage space.</p> <p>However, in terms of originality, use of movement as a physical element of communication, and minimal choreography to the music numbers, these elements remained competent; 'routine rather than especially interesting.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Competent	<p>This is hard to evaluate. The text by Peter Weiss is a well known, successfully published text. The text contains interesting points of view, philosophical arguments, rhetoric and polemic. Much of what is being SAID depends on the complex theatrical context demanded by the script (actors portraying inmates of an asylum, portraying characters from</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>French history etc.) I believe these complex levels of context are there to create theatrical interplay between, and comment upon, the spoken text. This was not successful in this production. Hearing the text through this production often became tedious. In this instance the performance did not achieve the theatricality that the text required to engage and make clear relevant meanings for the audience.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Competent	<p>Robert Rae's direction was impressive and successful in some aspects and unsuccessful in other aspects. RR had a strong overall vision for this production (social, political and artistic). RR put together a strong visual production with good, driving live music. The artistic vision was achieved in the production design and in social inclusion elements of the project, but less successful in communication of artistic themes and engagement of the audience. M/S did not achieve the sharpness and clarity of presentation necessary to effectively communicate the complex interplay of viewpoints offered in the script. The production was confusing. Points of view of the two characters, Marat and De Sade, interrupted and mediated by patients and other characters, were not clear. At times I found myself distracted (pleasantly) by the projected images or music, but missed what was being said. Aspects of the text were tedious and needed to be lifted into another realm of engagement with the audience to become theatrically effective. For the most part, this did not happen. Several of the Marat's & de Sade's speeches did not include enough variation to keep the polemical speeches engaging. Text was being spoken, ideas presented, but a necessary theatrical engagement was missing. Overall pacing of scenes needed more variation of rhythm and energy to keep dramatic structure interesting. Opportunities were missed to create a sharper juxtaposition between text images (spoken) and physical images on stage that would have highlighted the social satire elements of the text. Sharper, more focused direction of performances was necessary to create this theatricality and engagement with the audience. A very good desire to have audience visible in performing space around central platform. But this would have necessitated more attention to staging 'in the round'. Action was often oriented to the front audience without consideration of onstage audience.</p> <p>This was a large scale production, complex in staging and technical aspects. RR brought together and staged these elements in an impressive logistical production but the performance elements of the play needed more attention.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Good	Good live music by musicians of professional standard. The music was lively, engaging and appropriate to the style for which the production was aiming. The band was playing as the audience entered the space and this set a good tone for the beginning of the production, but somehow the performance itself did not 'lift off' in the way promised by the music. The use of music greatly aided the performance.
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	Good impressive, large scale Set Design by Gordon Davidson achieved the necessary environments / spaces for the complex levels of play the script (play set within an asylum). The set created many possible playing spaces which also reflected themes (religious, cloisters, hospital hallways, prisons, tiled, sterile asylum, etc.) yet also created spaces for the juxtaposed styles of play – political cabaret, with moving elements sliding out to create walkways etc. very appropriate. Design also allowed for audience to be 'onstage' around the central platform, viewed by large part of the rest of audience. This was a very good idea and could have been used more successfully in the performance (see direction comments). Costume Design by Kenny Miller was good and appropriate, also nicely incorporating and juxtaposing different styles of the different time layers of play. Lighting Design by George Tarbuck was fine and appropriate. Video projections and visual design by John McGeoch was impressive and very well done. The strong Artistic Vision of the design elements must also have been instigated and developed with the designers by Robert Rae.
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	Good technical presentation of complex elements; lighting, live music, microphones for performers, and large scale projections on set. Technically well done and professionally presented.
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,</p>		Sold out performance at capacity of circa 180. The production was appropriate for the audience and participants in the cast. The audience reaction was mixed. There were some strong supporters of the performance in the audience, evident by laughter, foot stomping and clapping after musical numbers, but these seemed in the minority. The performance was staged with some audience in the round and I had an opportunity to view the main seated aud.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>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>during first half of show. Many did not appear to be effectively engaged by the performance; little laughter at comic moments, looking at programmes during show. I engaged in some interval conversations and found that people were confused by the content of the play. Some audience comments at interval: “I was confused.” “That needed cutting, it’s too long!”, “The images are great, but I’m not really sure what is going on.” (I also felt this confusion). Did also hear people say, “That was great, very impressive” “Amazing production.” Some people left at interval, mostly older audience for whom I had impression production was too long. Second act proceeded much as the first, applause at end of the show was warm.</p>
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>	NA	Performance evaluation.
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>	NA	Performance evaluation.

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 large hall at the Assembly Rooms was very suitable for this event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A very good programme was available for free at the event. Contained good information about the project, company and production. Well designed and produced. A couple of photos on the downstairs wall by ticket table, but no other displays at venue.
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.	Normal and fine listings in usual media. I did not see flyers or posters, but am sure they do exist. I was unable to access the company's website, I tried from two different computers, so am unable to comment on website publicity.
Ease of booking and payment	Fine – tickets handled through Usher Hall box office.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Central Edinburgh – well known and easy to travel to by public transport.
External signage and signposting	No external signage that I could see, but this is a well known venue and there would be no problem finding it even for someone unfamiliar with the venue.
Internal directional signage	Fine. No actual signs, but well staffed to direct people as necessary.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Seemed fine provision for disabled people. Toilets accessible and elevator to performance space.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Start time was fine and appropriate. I felt the performance was too long and could have benefited from editing. A sizeable part of the audience was over 50 (60?) and some left at the interval, at least one group specifically said it would end too late (overheard).
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Good. Fine, friendly and appropriate.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Scottish Arts Council is prominently acknowledged as a key funder on programme. I have no doubt that this will be the case on all publicity materials and website, though I was unable to access the company website.

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.