



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: Twitching Blind
Venue: The Tramway
Title of Event: Naked Neighbour
Type of Event: Performance
Date of Visit: 30.01.2009
Overall Rating: 4: Good

Naked Neighbour was a unique, fun and playful theatrical narrative that combined several traditional styles and devices in new ways. The use of sound, music and song to express the characters' inner lives was particularly interesting. Though at times the story was confusing, *Naked Neighbour* was a unique performance and overall an enjoyable success.

Name: Tim Licata

Date: 16 / 02 / 09

Specialist Advisor

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	Naked Neighbour presented interesting and intriguing ideas, both in content and theatrical presentation. Seriously philosophical, playful, quirky and fun. I felt the writer, Nick Underwood, was quite challenging in exploring what could be done with a narrative structure. I can say that I have not experienced quite this type of structure in a play before. A melange of styles and devices in narration and music. I really enjoyed this. A down side was that at times I was confused as to the story and 'meaning'. I think that some ambiguity was intended, but I felt my confusion went deeper than that... My confusion as to character and story at times caused me to lose interest in the action. All was revealed however and overall the piece was interesting, playful and fun.
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 writer Nick Underwood, <i>Naked Neighbour</i> was first presented as a work in progress as part of the Arches Scratch Night in 2007. <i>NN</i> began as a philosophical question the author posed to himself (programme note). The programming vision and selection of this piece by the Tramway was good. <i>NN</i> is a very contemporary, fun exploration of an idea in narrative, music and dramatic structure. I felt it was a real experiment in many ways, and a successful one.
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	In his programme note, Nick Underwood outlines the ideas and interest out of which <i>Naked Neighbour</i> was born. Too long to reprint here, some of his main interests were; (my paraphrasing...) 'a philosophical exploration of love and its affect on one's concept and experience of time, an interest in a precise use of language and music and song to explore and express these ideas and his character's internal life.' The story also plays with theatrical structure, time and points of view. As Nick points out in his programme note, he feels some aspects of this piece are more successful than others. I think this is true. <i>Naked neighbour</i> attempts to playfully explore some interesting philosophical ideas, using several traditional theatrical and narrative forms in new ways. At times the structure created was not successful in remaining clear, but the attempt to explore and combine several theatrical and narrative devices was fun, interesting, unique and successful overall. I can say I have not seen a story like this on stage before.

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

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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	The performers, Rosalind Sydney and Ben Lewis, were both good professional performers. Their ability to engage the audience, portray the characters and communicate the story through straight narrative, physicality and song, was very good.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Good	Not choreography in the traditional sense, but good use of movement and space in portraying characters, creating the environments and theatrical spaces of the story.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	A very interesting original script by Nick Underwood. Nick began with a philosophical question regarding falling in love and the affect on his characters perception of time and also an interest in the “precision and comic timing of disappearing English” (programme note). I felt that Nick was quite successful in playfully exploring these interests. The result was a script which used language and theatrical form in fun and interesting ways. Playful, fun use of language in homage to some storytelling styles (mystery, detective thriller) as well as the precision and comic timing of Noel Coward and Oscar Wilde (I thought). The use of music and song, stemming from one character who was a songwriter, was very good. The narrative and structure of the piece were at times confusing, and the structure slightly repetitive, but these felt like less successful aspects of what was truly an original theatrical story.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	Rob Evans provided good, strong, clear direction of what could have been a very complicated script. Good simple use of environments and space. Actors were well cast. Artistic themes of the story well communicated.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Excellent	Songs by Nick Underwood, Sound Design and Composition by Mark Melville. I thought the music was a highlight and integral part of the piece. I felt this was truly a lovely use of <i>music theatre</i> – music used to express emotion and character in a heightened state that normal speech would not allow. The sound design and compositions for the songs were very good, interesting and moving. Both actors performed complex songs very well. Ben Lewis in particular was musically very strong. Song, particularly in the intimate theatre, was well used to communicate vulnerable sides of the characters. I felt this was rare and very nice to see.

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
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 Stage Design by Claire Halleran was good, strong, economic and very appropriate. Very good use of minimal set pieces to establish environments. Costumes also good and well suited. Lighting design by Simon Wilknsen complemented the design and style of the play.
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	The technical presentation was good and of professional standard.
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>		Tramway 4 (Studio) was about half full with circa 40 people attending. The audience was a range of ages from circa 20s to 50s. The audience enjoyed the performance, appeared engaged throughout and there was hearty applause at the finish.
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	Performance evaluation. I was not aware of other activities.
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	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	Tramway 4 (Studio) was very suitable for the event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A simple photocopied programme was available for free. Straightforward production information and author's comments. The author's comments were interesting, if a bit lengthy.
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.	Publicity listings in all normal publications. Minimal but clear website info. From Nick Underwood's website. Info. Listed on Tramway's website. I did not see flyer's / leaflets.
Ease of booking and payment	Fine
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Fine. Tramway is on main public transport route from Glasgow city centre.
External signage and signposting	Fine.
Internal directional signage	Fine – Tramway staff well placed to direct people.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Good. Theatre and toilets access for disabled people.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	7:45 start time was fine. It felt that the piece could have benefited from being slightly shorter, but the length was appropriate at just over an hour.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Fine. Professional.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Scottish Arts Council funding acknowledged on all printed material I saw and websites.

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.