



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:	SWEETSCAR
Venue:	TRAMWAY
Title of Event:	4.48 Psychosis
Type of Event:	PERFORMANCE
Date of Visit:	13th November 2008
Overall Rating:	Excellent

This was an extraordinary piece of performance in so many ways; the use of partial sensory deprivation and partial sensory overload was fascinating and for the most part, extremely effective. However, the extensive use of recorded voices, did cause me to disengage at times, and left me wanting to revisit Kane's original text. But what held this piece together was the riveting physicality of the central performance and despite the darkness at the heart of this piece, the final overall impression was that Kane's play is itself a celebration of human resilience and the ability to be creative under the most mind numbing, debilitating illness.

Name: **Stewart Ennis** Date: 15th November 2008 **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.	Excellent	Sweet-Scar describe this production as exploring “a mental state in which the normal boundaries between imagination and reality disappear” Particularly through the use of visual deprivation and –at times-aural overload this is achieved. The period of total darkness at the beginning is very effective in developing a sense of isolation in the audience, though the lengthy duration of darkness seemed as much to do with logistics of seating the audience. That said, this was a production in which every artistic decision appeared meticulously thought through. No theatrical device used ever felt gratuitous; rather it always felt employed in the service of the story it was committed to telling.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.	Excellent	This was a co-production with Cumbernauld Theatre and the Tramway. This is another indication that Cumbernauld, following the success of ‘Oresteia’, intends to continue its collaboration with experimental theatre practitioners. The Tramway also seems like a natural home for Sweet Scar.
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	Excellent	Described on the Cumbernauld Theatre web as “a journey into a mind and soul teeming with competing voices, reflecting the countless parts of a persona.” ;this it achieved to very good effect, through recorded voices, though at times these recorded lines of text voices do not engage as much as they might, partly <i>because</i> they are recorded. That said it was also through the use of <i>different voices</i> that the universality of the play and its themes were explored. Sarah Kane’s suicide was mentioned on the web and it is a fact that despite the said universality, the events surrounding her own life will always influence any reading of this play. But despite the necessary darkness of this piece, actually, the final overall impression was that the fact of the existence of Kane’s play is itself a celebration of human resilience and ones ability to remain creative under the most mind numbing, debilitating of illnesses.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Excellent	Keith Macpherson gave a riveting highly skilled physical, intelligent and emotional performance. Focus was held throughout and if anything, there could perhaps have been even more of the text used by the performer and less of the recorded text.

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
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Excellent	Though no choreographer or movement director is credited it does seem worthwhile mentioning again the tightly focused, almost choreographed physicality of the piece. It was this that gave the show much of its power.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	Kane's text was mainly recorded by a number of voices, with the performer only occasionally using text. This generally worked but there were times when I became quite disengaged from the voices and was mainly engaged only with the performer's physicality and live spoken text. It made me feel an urge to revisit Kane's original text, to see what I was missing, and for that reason alone, I have rated the script, or use of the script, as 'good' rather than excellent.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Excellent	This was never anything less than a fascinating interpretation of Kane's notoriously difficult text. Osmond's production, through technology, design and raw performance, successfully highlighted the universality of the kind of isolation felt by the central character. The production was almost unrelentingly desperate though there were odd moments of black humour.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Excellent	The music/sound design seemed crucial to the understanding of the piece, and an intrinsic component in its overall concept. At times the music was physically painful to listen to, but this aural overload was along with the accompanying visual sensory deprivation, assisted in creating the kind of disturbing disorientation which lay at the heart of the piece.
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	As with the music, the lighting and set design was crucial to the overall understanding of the show, which began in pitch black isolation. The framed set, the performer's room, where each part of his daily domestic routine was played out, worked beautifully and appeared to sit in a sea of blackness. Only latterly did we become aware of the other members of the audience. The sensory aspects of the show felt as much part of the 'text' as the 'words'.
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).	Excellent	Right from the start when we were led in total darkness by night-vision goggled ushers, to our isolated seats, through the slow reveal of the performers space and the performer and finally to the reveal of the other audience members, all aspects of presentation; recording, sound and lighting, were of a high technical standard
All	Audience Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction		The muted, hesitant applause at the end of the show was partly a response to the subject explored, and the manner of that exploration; but it also felt like a response to a lack of any invitation to applaud. Therefore it was difficult to gauge whether the lack of audible response was due to an emotional numbness brought on by the powerful performance or just an uncertainty about what to do next. A mixture of both perhaps.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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.	Good	There were information sheets offering telephone numbers and web addresses of organizations which could offer assistance to those who may have been affected by the performance.
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	This show seemed perfect for the Tramway.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	As well as a basic A4 programme the company also provided an information sheet with useful contacts for anyone who may have been affected by the shows content/issues.
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.	Web information on Cumbernauld and Tramway sites were useful and easy to negotiate.
Ease of booking and payment	There were no problems.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	On bus and train routes.
External signage and signposting	Easy to find.
Internal directional signage	No problems.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Adequate from what I could see.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The timing seemed appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Good and helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC acknowledged where appropriate.

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.