



### 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 1

**Title of Event:** The Persecution and Assassination Of Jean-Paul Marat

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2008

**Overall Rating:** *Competent*

It was a big ambitious and in many ways (particularly design and technically) an impressive production. There was a great deal to admire in that ambition – it was a large cast, fairly comfortably mixing community and professional performers; the design elements came together to create something that was, at times quite spectacular; and technically the mix of complex live and recorded sound, visual art, projection and captioning meant the audience was never short of stimuli. The problem for me came with pulling all that together into a production.

I had seen the play once before, on that occasion I had undertaken some research in advance but it left me wishing I had had a greater knowledge of the French revolution. On this occasion there was a promise of it being more accessible and I was excited about how the period score and the “dynamic audio visuals” would provide a new interpretation of the piece. Although those production elements were impressive, the result of all the many layers of the production was that it was certainly no more accessible and a good deal more confusing. In fact, I felt an even greater need to have researched Marat, Danton and to have brushed up on the ‘Girondins’ than with the previous production. I also could not help notice that the conversations I was part of (or overheard) at the interval were very much about confusion over events of the French revolution rather than any perceived connections with current situation or, for that matter, links with 1968.

**Name:** Stephen Stenning      **Date:** 14/11/2008

**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.   | Good      | The space was transformed with an impressive visual installation which included projection onto three sides of the set. The thought and imagination that had obviously gone into the visual had resulted in the promise of an exciting theatrical experience for the audience. The projected imagery made a connection with 1968 which was to be a key reference point for the production. There were some very good ideas, such as pointing up the contemporary relevance of the play, putting the audience in the asylum by staging it as a promenade piece and creating the elaborate visuals. The audio-visuals and the design were very skilfully executed but the ideas were not really followed through. That said, aside from the corralling of the audience at the start, it was not really a promenade piece and the greater part of the play seemed to then carry on with out using or referring to the elaborate staging or the visuals. |
| All (if relevant) | Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection<br>Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.<br><br>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. | N/A       |  |
| All               | Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.<br><br>Education events – see <sup>1</sup> below for guidance   | Poor      | There was an extremely good and very full programme that stated a number of aims for the production including the stimulation of political debate and the desire to draw parallels between the current political situation and that of 1968. Additionally, Theatre Workshop aims to produce professional well-crafted productions that are moving, challenging beautiful accessible and honest. The production was in many ways well-crafted and challenging, however the stated artistic themes were not clearly communicated. Setting the production in 1968 did not really help to achieve a sense of contemporary relevance for the piece.   |
| All               | Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.<br><br>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.   | Competent | There were a number of very strong performances. Nabil Shaban was a very impressive Marquis de Sade, Andrew McLey managed to generate a great deal of power, from his bathtub, as Jean Paul Marat and Ysy Collier gave a moving performance as a fiercely driven Corday. Another notable performance was   |

<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  |
|----------------|---|-----------|--|
|                |   |           | <p>Gregor Davidson's as Monsieur Duperret, a role he was covering due to illness.</p> <p>Because the audience was very close up and this was a very full production of a lengthy script, then sometimes the community cast, who on the whole did an excellent job, did not look entirely comfortable. It appeared difficult for the performers to balance the intense and very dense sections of dialogue between Marat and Sade (essentially detailed political debate) with the raucous ensemble scenes.</p>   |
| Dance, Theatre | Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc   | Competent | The choreographer, Jane Howie, had effectively arranged dances that really contributed to the wonderfully chaotic asylum scenes and gave a very clear sense of 'taking over the asylum'.   |
| Theatre        | Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.            | Competent | As far as I could tell the original was not changed at all and the script was performed in its entirety. Given the very impressive soundscapes and visuals along with the desire to have audience in amongst the performers thought perhaps could have been given to cutting the text.   |
| Theatre, Dance | Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.  | Competent | <p>There were some very impressive interpretive elements including the soundscape, the set design, the video design and the way the sign language interpreters were used. It was a very big and ambitious production that transformed Tramway 1 creating a genuine sense of excitement and anticipation amongst the audience.</p> <p>However, I felt that the ambition, the impressive production ideas and the very grand design created challenges for the delivery of the text that were not really met. The production was so big and provided the audience with so many stimuli that it made it difficult to follow the detail of the political arguments and easy thereby to lose the sense of the plot.</p> |
| Dance, Theatre | Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.  | Good      | Taken as a separate element of the production then the music/sound was imaginative conceived and skilfully executed. The musicians and singers generated a sense of debauchery and really took over the production when given their cue. The period score was effective and Ronnie McConnell (soundsapes), Ray love (Sound Engineer and the Musical Director Mikey Cameron all did very impressive work.   |
| 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      | I thought the visual effect of the set, costume and the lighting design was at times stunning and they created a very exciting visual picture to walk into. Gordon Davidson's clever set design provided a canvas for the video artist John McGeoch and created interesting and reasonably efficient ways of bringing the asylum into Marat's bathroom. Kenny Miller's costumes were in some cases provocative with a nod to hedonism in other cases summoned up images of the French revolution – in every case well designed.  |

| Artform | Criteria  | Rating    | Comments and key reasons for rating   |
|---------|---|-----------|---|
|         |   |           | Whilst the different elements of design worked well together to create a production that always looked good, they didn't provide much help with linking the events of post revolution France with the context of 1968 to create a contemporary relevance.   |
| 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>                        | Competent | There was an enormous amount to the technical presentation and the complexities of co-ordinating the video artists work, the soundscapes and the captioning must have been considerable. It was a very impressive show technically and for the most part it was surprisingly smoothly operated. However, the start of the second half was considerably delayed the night I attended by a technical hitch – this was made all the more noticeable because it was such a long first half.   |
| 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> |           | I would estimate the audience at about 150. There was a real sense of excitement when the audience entered the space and found themselves amongst the production. The audience were asked to stand at the beginning and it was clear that the director intended it to be a promenade experience. Apart from the beginning when Heralds worked well to break down the fourth wall and then Coulmier's address to the inmates included the standing audience there was little to be gained by being 'on the floor. Apart from that it was a very long time to be standing consequently the audience steadily moved to the seating. In truth, by the end most were watching it as if it were an end on production. The audience reaction was fairly enthusiastic, acknowledging that it was a very full and technically impressive production. It was certainly a production that provoked debate at the interval – in some cases the discussion seemed to be driven by confusion. |
| 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>  | N/a       |   |
| 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?

| Criteria  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| Suitability of the venue for the event  | The venue was ideal for the production both because of the kind of space that Tramway 1 offers and also because the combining of theatre and visual installation fitted well with the Tramways programme and audience. |
| Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.   | Excellent. The programme was very informative. Also the captioning, signing and audio description meant that interpretive information was to an extent worked in with the production.                                  |
| 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. | There was a good deal of advance publicity in Glasgow – I had seen posters before hand and it was featured in the Tramway's brochure. The websites were also informative.  |
| Ease of booking and payment   | Very easy I booked by telephone. Very straightforward.   |
| Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?   | I do not find The Tramway easy to get to as it is not really on any major transport routes. I went by underground and it is a bit of a walk to Shields Road and it is a fairly uncomfortable one at 10.45pm.           |
| External signage and signposting  | Not very good. There is a real lack of signs whether you drive or get public transport.  |
| Internal directional signage  | Good. I think the lay out inside the Tramway is very clear.  |
| Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?  | It appears a very good venue for wheelchair access and there are clearly disabled facilities.  |
| Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?  | Personally I could have done with it starting at 7pm rather than 7.30 just because the consequent 10.45 finishing time made the journey by public transport problematic.   |
| Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)   | Excellent. Especially the catering staff who could not have been more friendly or helpful.   |
| Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>   | There were acknowledgements within the programme and logos on the programme. The Tramway also has acknowledgements and logos.  |

<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.