



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

This evaluation is intended to represent an objective aesthetic judgement. **Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences wherever possible.**

Artist/Company:	Les Ballet C. de la B.
Venue:	Tramway, Glasgow
Title of Event :	Ashes
Type of Event:	Contemporary Dance Performance
Date of Visit:	Saturday 9 May 2009
Overall Rating:	5: Excellent

The Tramway was an excellent venue for this performance and managed the event very well. The production of 'Ashes' by Les Ballet C. de la B. was of a very high standard and created an adrenalin filled vibe throughout the evening, as is to be expected from this ground breaking performance company.

Name: James MacGillivray

Date: 14May 2009

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 on 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 future 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:

- Very poor-** standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- Poor** - not well conceived and executed
- Satisfactory**
- Good** - well conceived and executed
- Very Good** – well conceived and executed to a very good standard
- Excellent** – Inspiring and executed to an exceptionally 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	<p>Vision and imagination of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of ideas if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons 	Excellent	Les Ballet C. de la B. does not work within all of the traditional conventions of contemporary dance and theatre. This approach tends to allow for the unusual and the extraordinary to happen on stage. This production – <i>Ashes</i> – has a very simple theme of mortality and loss. The imagination of the choreography, music, and set design epitomise the style and vision that is now expected from this extraordinary company.
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	Excellent	The programming of Les Ballet C.de la B. fits in very well with the Tramway’s artistic vision. The venue books high quality international and local contemporary work, and this performance was not an exception. The company have performed at the Tramway on previous occasions, and have built up a strong audience base.
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? How well did it communicate the artistic themes? How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Excellent	<p>Referring to the venue’s printed brochure material, the performance achieved all of its stated aims: ‘breathtaking and highly original’; ‘performers fuse dance and acrobatic skill to create a mesmerising meditation on impermanence’.</p> <p>The performance also fitted in very well to the Tramways programming vision – proclaiming to have ‘provided Scotland with some of the most original, inspiring and often provocative events seen in the UK’.</p> <p>The pre-show discussion (Critical Encounters) was informative and achieved its stated aims.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments. How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience? In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop? 	Very Good	<p>Each performer had his/her own particular skills which were used to great effect throughout the work. The dancers were not all technically strong, but were chosen for their broad range of experiences, maturity, and suitability to the needs of the work. They were generally well cast in their roles however I was not completely convinced of their performances on a dramatic level.</p> <p>The musicians were excellent and the singers of a very high standard. They were very well incorporated into the structure of the work, but again I was not entirely convinced by their dramatic skills and their engagement within the piece. Particular commendation to the acrobat who used the trampoline to great effect – adding sensitivity and adrenalin to the show through his physical and performative skills.</p>

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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the work original? How was the space used? How many dancers were there and how were they used? How long was the piece? 	Very Good	Eight dancers of all age ranges and backgrounds were used to great affect. The strengths of each dancer were explored and exploited throughout the work. The choreography was effective in the presentation of ideas, although was sometimes underdeveloped. The space and set were used incredibly well, with dancers climbing in, out and around every part of the structure. This 3D effect is unusual for dance and helped to add many extra layers to the work.
Theatre	Script Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new work second productions classics where the original has been substantially changed 	N/A	N/A
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the work well interpreted? Was it well cast? Was it well presented? 	Very Good	<p>The simple theme for 'Ashes' was explored in many different ways, and each performer well cast to add to the telling of the tale in their particular way. The work was presented to a very high standard.</p> <p>The development of some of the ideas sometimes lacked clear direction, and more could have been done to help the performers interpret the work dramatically.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? Is it live or recorded? 	Excellent	An exceptional arrangement of live music performed by five musicians and two singers brought enormous depth, power and texture to the work. Incorporating the musicians and singers into the set and structure of the work also enhanced the sense of atmosphere.
Dance, Theatre	Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How were the costumes, set and lighting? How did it work in the venue? Was it technically proficient? (eg lighting and sound cues, etc). 	Very Good	The vast, complicated set added many layers to the work, providing a myriad of platforms for the performers to climb and bounce around on. Particularly effective was the use of a suspended trampoline, allowing images of freefall and risk taking to show. The set was positioned in front of the central wall posts at the Tramway, bringing the performance space closer to the audience than usual. Unfortunately this meant that sightlines were rather restricted - Anything happening too far downstage was obstructed by heads of people in front. The show was very slick from a technical point of view.
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the production/event targeted at a particular audience? Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? Were you/ engaged/inspired? Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired? 	Excellent	The performance received a fantastic audience response and even a standing ovation. There already appeared to be a lot of excitement in and around the foyer areas prior to the performance as the audience arrived to see this popular company. The combination of spectacular and integrity to the work appeared to rouse the audience throughout the evening. For a relatively long dance piece the audience remained engaged and excited for the duration.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was their response? • Approximately how many people were there? • Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? • Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many? • What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? • Were these targeted at specific age groups? <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led eg one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix? • Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development • What learning/skills development took place? • What was the quality of the art produced by the participants? • Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project? • How were participants recruited? • Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project? <p>Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?</p>		<p>The large auditorium appeared to be over ¾ full.</p> <p>There appeared to be a broad range of people in the audience. The performance targeted dance fans and general public alike.</p> <p>A free pre-show talk was provided on the Friday performance and a longer free pre-show discussion (Critical Encounter) was provided on the day I attended. The discussion was not specific to this performance, but rather dealt with a broader range of subjects surrounding international dance/theatre and the origins of contemporary dance in Flanders. Well attended, very informative, and well organised. A complimentary refreshment was provided after the discussion.</p>

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
<p>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route? Are the spaces clean? What were the sight lines like? How big was it? 	<p>I drove to the Tramway and found good signage from the city centre. Parking was easy in front of the venue, although there is no dedicated car park.</p> <p>Tramway 1 lends itself well to this kind of work. With its adaptable nature and bare brick walls, it often adds to the atmosphere of the work. Although sightlines were restricted by the positioning of the set, as I have mentioned above.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? Is there information on the venue's website? 	<p>Programmes were available, however audience members had to return to the box office area to purchase them. This created a certain amount of confusion and frustration. They were readily available after the performance at the exits to the auditorium. The programme was large and eye-catching, although not very informative. Only a small portion given over to an interview with various collaborators.</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? What publicity materials are produced? Is it easy to understand? Where can you get the information? Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²? <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	<p>Living some distance from the venue, I was not exposed to very much publicity material – posters etc. The venue brochure is very clear and informative, as is the website. Posters and leaflets at the venue clearly display upcoming performances.</p> <p>There was adequate acknowledgement of SAC funding.</p>
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>I tried to call to book tickets on a Monday, as the brochure suggested I would be able to. However an answer phone message informed me that the box office is closed on Mondays. I was able to book with ease the next day. Very helpful staff also informed me of the free afternoon Critical Encounter event which tied in with the evening performance.</p>
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? Was the length appropriate? 	<p>Critical Encounter was from 5 – 7pm. Very good time and length. Evening performance started at 7.30pm and ran for approx 1 hr 40mins. This was a very good length, and seemed like great value for money.</p>
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the entrance clearly marked? Is there clear internal directional signage? Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 	<p>Good signage all round the building. I was not aware of Braille signage. Publicity brochure informed customers of facilities for people with hearing difficulties.</p>

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.

Criteria	Comment																			
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<table border="1" data-bbox="571 185 1257 707"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="571 185 823 253"></th> <th data-bbox="823 185 916 253">Yes/ No</th> <th data-bbox="916 185 1165 253"></th> <th data-bbox="1165 185 1257 253">Yes/ No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 253 823 353">BSL interpretation</td> <td data-bbox="823 253 916 353">No</td> <td data-bbox="916 253 1165 353">Audio description of performances</td> <td data-bbox="1165 253 1257 353">Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 353 823 434">Captioning</td> <td data-bbox="823 353 916 434">No</td> <td data-bbox="916 353 1165 434">Lift/ramp</td> <td data-bbox="1165 353 1257 434">Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 434 823 707">Accessible toilets</td> <td data-bbox="823 434 916 707">Yes</td> <td data-bbox="916 434 1165 707">Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td data-bbox="1165 434 1257 707">Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="571 741 1452 880">Whilst audio description was not available for this performance, the Tramway does appear to provide this function for suitable performances in Tramway 1 and 4. Large print material is available on request.</p>					Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	Yes	Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	Yes	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	Yes
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<p>Customer service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	<p data-bbox="571 913 1461 981">Excellent level of service from all areas of the building. Box office, café and FOH staff all very helpful and polite.</p> <p data-bbox="571 1014 1452 1216">It is usual to expect to be able to purchase programmes at the door to the auditorium, however members of the public were being redirected back to the box office to buy the programmes. This caused confusion and a certain amount of chaos in the foyer area as people queued again at box office. Programmes were clearly on sale after the performance as the audience exited the auditorium.</p>																			

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.