



Scottish **Arts** Council

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:	Traverse Theatre and Birmingham Rep
Venue:	Traverse
Title of Event:	Pornography
Type of Event:	Performance
Date of Visit:	12/08/2008
Overall Rating:	Good This was an imaginatively staged production with excellent and evocative design that emphasised the intimate individual stories and the isolation of urban life. This comment on contemporary living and the confounding of archetypes lay at the heart of the piece, which was not represented well in its publicity material. This meant that although this was a strong production in most respects, it didn't quite meet expectations.
Name: Jaine Lumsden	Date: 01/09/2008
Scottish Arts Council Officer	

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	This was an imaginatively staged production with excellent and evocative design that emphasised the intimate individual stories and the isolation of urban life. This comment on contemporary living and the confounding of archetypes lay at the heart of the piece, which was not represented well in its publicity material as the focus was on the characters and this theme, as opposed to the events of that week. (Live 8, gaining the Olympics, 7/7 bombing.)
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	This was a UK premiere co-produced by the Traverse and Birmingham Rep. The production was part of the Traverse's Fringe programme, which was a good mixture of Scottish and international new writing.
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	“Startling new play...that captures Britain as it crashes from the euphoria and promise of the 2012 Olympics announcement into the devastation of 7/7” (programme) The publicity for the play did not truly reflect what lay at its core. It did not really capture Britain's moods in that week neither could it be called “startling.” This means that although the production had many strengths it could not be said to have met its stated aims well.
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	All of the performers gave engaging performances which revealed their inner thoughts in a consistently believable way. They did justice to a script which anonymised the characters (no names), but also gave each of them depth and humanity.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		N/A
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	By Simon Stephens. This cleverly interwove the characters' disparate lives. The individual storylines did not inter-relate (apart from the incestuous brother and sister) but taken as a whole provided an insight into urban life – specifically its isolation. The characters were

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>skilfully drawn, and deliberately used and then confounded archetypes – eg the self-isolated elderly female intellectual who watches porn, the apparently driven executive type who leaks her company's plans to a rival. There were also some highly effective humorous one-liners.</p> <p>Where the script was less successful was in capturing Britain's changing moods in the week of Live 8, gaining the Olympics and the 7/7 bombings. These events worked more as a backdrop and a reference to the characters' lives than as the central focus of the play.</p> <p>See under success against stated aims.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	By Sean Holmes. This was well cast and Holmes gave strong direction which ensured that a very text-based piece that was primarily a series of monologues had life. The use of the stage and a highly imaginative set ensured that the piece sustained visual interest. The final scene (where the 7/7 victims' names were projected) didn't manage to portray the horror of the bombings or the human consequences. This was partly practical (the projection area was too small) and partly because the core of the play was actually about the individuals as opposed to the events of that week.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	Sound design by Emma Laxton added to the urban feel 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	<p>Designer – Paul Willis. Lighting Designer – Chris Davey</p> <p>The set deliberately hid none of the workings of the theatre, with wires and lights hanging from the rig and no masking and little set as such. This concept included having the operator onstage throughout. The lighting design was appropriately quite dim at times and the use of the flickering hanging neon lights was especially effective. The set and lighting design created a very urban aesthetic which emphasised the intimacy of the characters' stories while reflecting the notions of confounding archetypes/playing with expected realities in the script.</p>
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>	Competent	Professionally presented

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.		
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>		Sold out. Mixed ages. Good reaction.
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>		N/A
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>		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	Appropriate
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Posters displayed. I'm sure there were programmes for sale but I didn't come across a front of house person selling any, so was unable to purchase. I think this was probably because as a sold out performance with unallocated seats the front of house were concentrating on fitting everybody in.
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.	Traverse website, programme, listings, some preview coverage. See comments above re. accuracy of description within Traverse publicity.
Ease of booking and payment	Fine – by phone.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	On main transport routes.
External signage and signposting	Fine (if a little obscured by ongoing building works.)
Internal directional signage	Fine
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	There is a lift for people with mobility problems
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Seemed appropriate
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Friendly and efficient (especially box office) which is the norm for the Traverse.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Acknowledged

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.