



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: Traverse Theatre

Venue: Traverse Theatre

Title of Event: Hoors

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 21st May 2009

Overall Rating: Good

(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses. If the management of the event affects the overall enjoyment of the event, please comment, but the overall rating should be based on the artistic merit of the event.)

This production of **Hoors** was presented to the usual high standard of production values which the Traverse regularly achieves with its in-house work. The choice of cast, director, designer and playwright worked within the context of the Traverse programme.

Hoors is a commission by Gregory Burke, directed by Jimmy Fay, designed by Conor Murphy with a company of four actors and produced by the Traverse Theatre and The Ustinov Bath in association with the Tron Theatre, Glasgow. The production opened at the Traverse, toured to the Tron, before moving the Ustinov in Bath. The audience enjoyed the event.

Name: Sally Hobson

Date: 10th June 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	Vision and imagination of work <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 	Good	<p>The play Hoors explores the lives of four mid-20 to mid-30 year olds living in Scotland today. The script dealt in a humorous way with the subject of relationships between men and women.</p> <p>The plot reveals the aftermath of a particularly wild stag visit to Amsterdam when the groom passed away mid-flight during the act of sex with an air hostess following the misuse of unreliable drugs. His presence is represented on stage by the positioning of a coffin stage right. We see his bride acknowledging to her sister that the marriage would have been a huge mistake. The groom's two friends agree not to tell the bride how he died since she has no idea of the circumstances.</p> <p>The majority of the plot then goes on to show the manoeuvres of each character to outwit the other in a desire to find gratification either through drugs, sex or alcohol. There are some particular nasty moments as the play proceeds, for example revealed in a moment of profound cruelty the bride finds out how her fiancé actually died. The events of the play take place in the duration of one evening.</p> <p>The play is described as a black comedy. The play is effective as a drama.</p>
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection <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. 	Good	<p>The choice of script and production made perfect sense in the context of the work of the Traverse Theatre. It was a new script by Gregory Burke, who has regularly presented his work at this theatre, and enjoys a relationship with the venue and its audiences. Hoors had previously received a rehearsed reading in 2008.</p>
All	Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance <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>	Good	<p>The play delivered precisely what the marketing information described it would.</p> <p>The production supported the script very well.</p> <p>It was a black comedy.</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

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Performers/tutors <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>Cast – Catherine Murray and Lisa Gardner played the two sisters who are in their mid to late twenties. Michael Moreland and Andy Clark played the two male characters in their mid-thirties. The male performers were very convincing and cohesive as the two friends. The female performers whilst very professional, were less convincing in their portrayal of the two self-obsessed young women.</p> <p>On occasions the performers looked uneasy, but apart from that presented very good company work.</p>
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? 	N/A	
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 	Satisfactory	<p>The script had been presented as a rehearsed reading at the Traverse in 2008. There is clear evidence of good dramaturgical development and progression by Katherine Mendelsohn. The dialogue is excellently paced and genuinely captured a quality of inane avoidance allowing the characters to deal with nothing of any real consequence. The dialogue bounced back and forward between the characters in a jovial and well judged manner. It was convincing and acutely observed.</p> <p>The endgame between the four characters did not develop into anything interesting and petered out into nothingness. Although the script and characters were convincingly portrayed and delivered, they had no dramatic depth.</p> <p>The craftsmanship of the writer and the Traverse dramaturgical support team is clear since the play works successfully in most dramatic senses.</p> <p>However ultimately the script fails to impress since it says nothing interesting about men and women.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	satisfactory	The direction was good and attempted to inject some movement and action into a static setting – the action took place in a living room and one bedroom.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 	satisfactory	Interlude only and perfectly functional.

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 <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). 	Good	<p>The revolving stage, whilst interesting on its first few rounds, failed to make up for the lack of action in the script.</p> <p>Nicely designed and well produced.</p>
All	Quality of Public Engagement <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <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? • 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 	good	<p>The audience enjoyed the script the night this assessor observed the production. The laughter was loud and enthusiastic.</p> <p>A broad age range. Young people in a school party and other ages well represented in what was virtually a full house.</p> <p>The production started on time.</p> <p>About 40 minutes into the play there was a lull in audience’s engagement for about 5 minutes when the pace dropped in the script. The pace never quite managed to regain its remarkable ability to entertain and the play finishes on a distinctly unpleasant flavour which is presumably the intention of the author.</p> <p>There is no real satisfaction to be found in the world of Nikki, Vicky, Stevie and Tony and the audience is left with this experience. Pleasure is chosen over joy, and the experience is shallow.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	structure and content of the project? Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?		

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
Location and suitability of the venue for the event <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? 	A good venue, well equipped and designed.
Information/ interpretive material at venue— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? • Is there information on the venue's website? 	A script was available to buy as a programme. The website is informative and helpful.
Publicity/ pre-publicity – <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>	Good Website good SAC acknowledged on programme sponsorship and development page
Ease of booking and payment	Very good
Timing of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? • Was the length appropriate? 	Good
Signage and signposting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the entrance clearly marked? • Is there clear internal directional signage? • Is there Braille signage or 	Good

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																
signage for audio loops?																	
<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"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="571 226 821 293"></th> <th data-bbox="826 226 917 293">Yes/ No</th> <th data-bbox="922 226 1145 293"></th> <th data-bbox="1150 226 1257 293">Yes/ No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 293 821 394">BSL interpretation</td> <td data-bbox="826 293 917 394">yes</td> <td data-bbox="922 293 1145 394">Audio description of performances</td> <td data-bbox="1150 293 1257 394">yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 394 821 472">Captioning</td> <td data-bbox="826 394 917 472">no</td> <td data-bbox="922 394 1145 472">Lift/ramp</td> <td data-bbox="1150 394 1257 472">yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 472 821 741">Accessible toilets</td> <td data-bbox="826 472 917 741">yes</td> <td data-bbox="922 472 1145 741">Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td data-bbox="1150 472 1257 741">Don't know</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	yes	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	Don't know
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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? 	Good																

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.