

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: Ek Performance/Traverse Theatre

Venue: Traverse Theatre

Title of Event: *What We Know*

Type of Event: Theatre performance

Date of Visit: 20th February 2010

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.)

The second in a series of *Traverse Too* experimental productions *What We Know* examined the early stages of grief and shock following the unexpected loss of a partner. A very particular perspective was employed in an intellectually objective way to tell the story. With an excellent cast of six, a carefully plotted script backed by a large production team this short play directed and written by Pamela Carter, Director of EK was presented to a reasonably high standard within a budget setting.

Name: Sally Hobson
Specialist Advisor

Date: 22nd February 2010

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 	Good	<p>The work examines death, but in particular the on-going effects of the actual moment of loss. The audience does not know what is going on in the narrative so the coherence around the event (the moment of loss) is not revealed until the narrative progresses through a further two acts/sections. The narrative is engaging and intriguing. The play is in three different times. We are distracted from knowing that someone has died. Eventually this theatrical conceit reaches completion within a dinner party in the third sequence. There is an odd, fractured and disconnected feeling to the play, likely the effect the writer/director desires in the creation of an embodiment of shock.</p>
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. 	good	<p>“Traverse Too is a chance for you to experience new, experimental, off-the-wall work by both our newest and more established writers.”</p> <p><i>What We Know</i> is a good choice for the Traverse Too strand of work. <i>What We Know</i> was previously commissioned by the Tramway in 2008 as part of the 20th anniversary season. EK fits at the Traverse as a new writing company, making this a good curatorial choice.</p>
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>	Good	<p>The production matched information and was clear in its ability to communicate the ideas in an interesting way.</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? 	Excellent	<p>An excellent company of six performers who all presented very good performances. Kate Dickie as Lucy was sufficiently belligerent and bewildered by turns as the central character experiencing the loss. Jo, her partner was played with flair by Paul Thomas Hickey. Pauline Lockhart, Anne Lacy and Robin Lang were also excellent as the strange gathering of dinner guests. Lorn McDonald did a good job as a strange teenager that appears in a muddled and confused surreal conversation with Dickie in the</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
			second inexplicable section of the narrative.
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 	Good	The script captured in the first section a setting of middle class comfort; a style necessary in order to then achieve the intervention of a different sense of reality that occurs when the death intervenes, thus changing Lucy's sense of reality. The script changed pace and context to handle these altered mental states. Characterisations all sustained well by text, and the action. The script was tight and focused.
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Good	The direction seemed at its best when interplay between the characters was focused. In section one and section three the conversations and tension were deftly supported by the direction. A clear directorial vision was in evidence.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 	Good	The music was used incidentally, with a sinister interlude at the point when Jo dies. We don't see this happen due to a theatrical sleight of hand but the music helps to suggest something odd/unusual has happened. The rest was fine.
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). 	Competent	The use of mismatched kitchen equipment indicated a normal home, moved about midway to suggest a change of perspective or shift in time of some kind has just taken place. Unexceptional, basic and functional. Supported the action.
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? • 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 		The audience appeared to enjoy the event. They enjoyed particularly the performance of and part played by Anne Lacey whose conflict with Robin Laing's character offered some of the best comic and surprising moments in the evening. Lacey's character despite having a prickly personality provided a central solidity and experience of understanding. The character offered a reality within the fractured oddness of the play's action.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>materials were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>		

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? 	Central Edinburgh. Access problems exist at the moment due to work being done to Usher Hall.								
<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? 	Good. Programme helpful and extensive.								
<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>	Access to information on the production on the Traverse website								
Ease of booking and payment	Good								
<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? 	8pm evening start is usual.								
<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? 	New signage in Traverse helpful								
<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</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/ No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/ No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>Yes 23/2</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>23/2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	Yes 23/2	Audio description of performances	23/2
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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			
comments below the table <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	yes
Customer service <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? 	Accessible toilets	yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	yes
	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.