



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:	Untitled Projects / Tramway / Traverse Theatre
Venue:	Tramway 4 and 1
Title of Event :	An Argument about Sex
Type of Event:	<i>Play</i>
Date of Visit:	17/10/09
Overall Rating:	Very Good
<i>(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – ie 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.)</i>	
This was a production which successfully married a current situation to a piece of classical drama. It was executed with wit and style.	
Name: Ace McCarron	Date:23/10/09
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 	Very Good	<p>A serious and politically pertinent ambition underlies this project. The nature of the credit crunch bears the template of untrammelled masculine greed, and Marivaux's thought-experiment, 'La Dispute' has, in this production, certainly warranted examination to see whether anything relevant can be brought to bear on this predicament. Untitled have pursued this project vigorously and stylishly, embracing dramaturgical elaboration and formal innovation with confidence and focussed imagination.</p> <p>As with their production of 'Slope', which I saw, a radical staging regime underlay a particular dramatic ambition.</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. 	Very Good	<p>This production has moved Untitled's ambitions towards a topic of more urgent relevance in response to matters which, when dramatised in a more conventional form, can appear philosophically underpowered. Because Ms Carter's text relates attitudes in aquisition to our sexuality, it is harder to ignore.</p> <p>This also represents the kind of work which, I'm sure, the Traverse and Tramway are keen to promote, using space imaginatively and combining traditional and radical drama in a cogent way.</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>	Very Good	<p>I can't find a website for Untitled. It seems that they have a construct which allows them an artistic freedom which is almost complete, and the backing of venues to facilitate this. As such, and with such a well-conceived idea, one can only reflect, conversely, on the quality of the printed material to reflect the core strength of the conception. This was not a difficult task, and was well done. It communicated effectively.</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? 	Good	<p>The production embraced a disparity in styles between the reconceived scenes and the central, original section. Both, nonetheless, relied on rapid expression of character, so that the business of the debate could progress. Whilst most of the cast found this well within their capabilities, there were exceptions which compromised the resolution of the play. Elizabeth Chan displayed a huge amount of vocal and physical capability, together with a radiant warmth, which served the part very well</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? 		The middle section of this performance, which was the most authentically rendered, utilised a fluid, energetic regime of movement in the huge space created for it. This was borne out by this section of the cast with consistency and application.
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	<p>Marivaux work, like a lot of French classical drama, does not, in my experience translate easily into English. The central section of this performance seemed to be a largely unedited translation of the original, and this was pleasingly successful in its fluency, providing the actors with clear motivation. The first scene, in the original, briskly portrays a simple situation of a woman unsure whether she should marry, given her apprehensions about male promiscuity. Pamela Carter has created a corporate situation for the two characters who witness the grand experiment with four foundlings. This cranks up the odds to additionally encompass the more popular current obsession of global finance. The installation of women in positions of power is a lynch-pin of Western influence over non-Western governments, but I would agree with Ms Carter were she to say that the absence of a consolidatory and nurturing female rationale in the conduct of international banking was a topic which was under-explored in the extensive media response to the global meltdown. As a marriage of a contemporary imperative for debate and acknowledgement of classical value, this was a successful undertaking.</p> <p>A film is projected as the third section of the performance, after the translated scenes. It is an interview with Matt Ridley, an academic writer on gender evolution, and his questioners are the director and author themselves.</p> <p>The muse of drama could be sensed squirming in the firmament, and I was left to ponder whether the dramatist's traditional habit of articulating opinion, by having people running around in fancy costumes, pretending to be different people entirely, was, in this case, justifiably inadequate. Mr Ridley had some fascinating things to say, but I had to concentrate to tie this information to the experience of the preceding drama. Had she seamlessly concocted a live, and dramatically integrated injection of cutting-edge thought on to the stage before our very eyes, Ms Carter would have achieved something breathtaking. She did not, but it is a tall order and her solution was executed in such a shamelessly experimental way, that I was won over. Is not experiment the central thesis of Marivaux's play, after all? Any interruption to the trajectory of the drama by the film might be balanced by the satisfying of the devout curiosity the play successfully conjured.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Good	<p>The original play is based on a simply-expressed and comprehended premise; Hermiane and the Prince are in love, but Hermiane is fearful of entering into a lifelong journey amid the spectres of infidelity. This is not too dissimilar to scores of contemporaneous plays we might reasonably have encountered. In this reworking, we are given to know a great deal more about these two characters; their romantic track record, the nature of their business interaction, their professional roles within that business, and the financial disaster, potential and actual, which surrounds them. Our reaction to them is necessarily more complicated than in the original, and the task of getting an audience to care about them presents greater challenges. Failure to quite achieve this was the greatest failure of this production. While the mind was always given something worthwhile to ponder, I never really felt a sense of triumph in the characters when they decide to create a family at the end.</p> <p>This was a failure in characterisation, and it was promoted by a monotonous rhythm in the dialogue, and a failure to articulate personality by physicality and gesture in both of the actors concerned. While one might muse upon the commonplaceness of an emotionally sterile marriage, one felt for the baby whom we know will be born unto such a seemingly joyless couple, and as such, this is tragic. But wait, isn't this meant to be a comedy? I began to imagine that the exaggeration of contest, underlining of contradiction, and forced articulation of the truth, might have served this production extremely well.</p> <p>On the other hand, Stewart Laing's staging of the main section as a run around the audience promoted, as in his production of 'Slope', a great feeling of comfortable mutuality and enforced concentration in the audience. While he might have created a show with formal inconsistencies, and some missed opportunities, the wholesale radical nature of what he was attempting made this forgivable. His casting included noteworthy talent, and his discipline in controlling the elements of the staging produced great strength.</p> <p>I applaud Untitled's reluctance to offer programmes before the performance. We watched the performance undistracted by expectation, information or entreaty to be impressed, but our curiosity was assuaged by a comprehensive handout on leaving the auditorium.</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? 	Good	<p>A lavish recording of Vivaldi's Four Seasons ushered us in to the larger space to witness the experiment in an idyllic world with a more poetic way of communicating.</p> <p>The cast used radio mikes in the larger space, which may have been an afterthought, but the amplification was so well-executed as to appear natural to the production.</p>

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). 	Very Good	<p>As before, the beauty of this project was that it seemed to have been created around an indelibly strong staging idea. The deliberate contrast between a conventional studio space with a naturalistic office set, and an expansive rural idyll, with its scatter of plastic garden chairs for the audience, lives easily in the memory, along with the dramatic purpose which governed their selection. Attention to finish and detail was extremely good, with some deft touches, such as the unreferenced, but entirely articulate, presence of a stuffed chimp in a frock, which adorned the office worktop. The overall appearance was always simple and consistently stylish.</p> <p>Lighting by Mike Brookes was unfussy, stylish and entirely correct.</p> <p>The sound design embraced a straightforward idea, which was not necessarily easy, and executed it with consistency and clarity.</p>
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 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? Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate): <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 	Very Good	<p>In prospecting for an audience of open-minded and concerned Glaswegians, the Tramway was an excellent venue, aside from considerations of the facilities. I and my co-spectators were engaged and amused. 90 of us attended, which was about half the capacity of the studio space. A wide range of ages showed up, and had there been any spectators arriving in wheelchairs the large space would have presented no problems, except for the stream which cut across the space. I'm confident that the Tramway had made provision for this as the 'Slope' project was built around an ideal of accessibility.</p> <p>As mentioned before, programmes were distributed after the performance and they were informative and extensive in scope.</p> <p>Supporting materials were effectively built into the performance, and a programme of two debates was scheduled, as well as a post-show discussion. Audio and sign-language performances were offered at the Traverse performances, but not at the Tramway.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>produced by the participants?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<p>Very suitable. Some initial misgivings about sightlines from individually scattered chairs were unfounded.</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>Information about the show at the venue and on the Tramway website was extensive.</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>The show was well-leafleted, and I saw some prominent posters on my brief visit to Glasgow. It was all fine. SAC funding was acknowledged throughout.</p>
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>Very easy, and reliable.</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																
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? 	All was ok, and to perform without an interval was entirely justified.																
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 signage for audio loops? 	Before I can orientate myself in the Tramway foyer, there is always a member of front-of-house staff who will approach and politely make things clear. I didn't notice braille signage.																
Access and provision for disabled people <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="571 510 1262 1032"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="571 510 823 577"></th> <th data-bbox="828 510 916 577">Yes/ No</th> <th data-bbox="920 510 1165 577"></th> <th data-bbox="1169 510 1262 577">Yes/ No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 577 823 680">BSL interpretation</td> <td data-bbox="828 577 916 680">Y</td> <td data-bbox="920 577 1165 680">Audio description of performances</td> <td data-bbox="1169 577 1262 680">Y</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 680 823 761">Captioning</td> <td data-bbox="828 680 916 761">N</td> <td data-bbox="920 680 1165 761">Lift/ramp</td> <td data-bbox="1169 680 1262 761">N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 761 823 1032">Accessible toilets</td> <td data-bbox="828 761 916 1032">Y</td> <td data-bbox="920 761 1165 1032">Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td data-bbox="1169 761 1262 1032">N</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	Y	Audio description of performances	Y	Captioning	N	Lift/ramp	N/A	Accessible toilets	Y	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	N
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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? 	Very 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.