



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: Visible Fictions

Venue: The Traverse

Title of Event: *Curse of the Demeter*

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 23rd October 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.)

Douglas Irvine's *Curse of the Demeter* is strong and coherent production based on the myths and stories around the idea of the vampire. Inspired directly by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* it deals specifically with the journey of the ship that carried Dracula to England. With music by Daniel Padden and designed by Lisa Sangster, the production is presented by two male performers Jonathan Holt and Gavin Kean who play all the characters of the crew on board the ship. This show achieved an overall good rating as a strong and well produced piece of work for young people.

Name: Sally Hobson
Specialist Advisor

Date: 18th November 2009

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	A very contained and focused production with a taut script and tight direction. The vision of the director Douglas Irvine and the writer Robert Forrest was presented with clarity and worked well for an audience of young people as well as adults. The use of small scale technology within a small set was imaginative and effective and added hugely to the scope of the production.
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	Presenting <i>Curse of the Demeter</i> was a good choice for both Visible Fictions and the Traverse - Both company and venues have audience bases from which to draw. The production provides good work for young people and adult audiences alike.
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>Visible Fictions presents the chilling and thrilling tale of the ill fated ship, the Demeter, and her ghostly cargo. A spine tingling journey of suspense, suspicion and spooky sightings. Whilst storms rage and the crew mysteriously disappear one by one, fear grows as rumours of a sinister stowaway spread around the remaining ship-mates. Inspired by Bram Stoker's Dracula, this new play will leave you sitting on the edge of your seat as things go bump in the night on board the jinxed ship.</p> <p>The play delivered well against the stated objectives of the play and those of the company's objectives. To a good standard of delivery expected from Visible Fictions.</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	The two actors performed all the characters from the script and effectively created an atmospheric storytelling theatrical experience. They switched between direct address and characterisation dialogue smoothly, expressing the different personalities of the crew without any disruption to the telling of the story. They negotiated the set and technology with accomplished calm. Their character's fear and paranoia was well acted and delivered with a good pace.
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography</p> <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	

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
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 was coherent and well written. Characterisation was strong and the language appropriate for a young audience alongside adult attendees. The script and production drew its inspiration from Bram Stoker's classic novel <i>Dracula</i> . The script was an imaginative re-telling of the journey to England of the cargo ship <i>The Demeter</i> which brings to England the coffin containing the remains of Dracula. It was written with an increasing sense of tension and achieved a high level of dramatic effect. The journey was told from the perspective of all the crew and the increasing problems they experienced throughout the voyage and the increasing fear and paranoia to their eventual demise. No-one survived the trip.
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Good	The production was well paced and used the stage set very well. A small scale touring production set the design and staging of the play gave a strong feeling of being aboard a ship, and managed to convey a claustrophobic and labyrinthine sense of space. The casting was appropriate and the integration of all the creative elements was strong.
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 composed score worked very well to heighten the atmosphere and increase tension as the story unfolded.
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	A very compact and effective set which allowed for the practicalities of the story to be told as well as setting a claustrophobic environment upon a ship. It was used very effectively to create a strong sense of the different levels to be found on board a ship. A sense of movement was achieved by the use of simple props swinging back and forth, and the lower decks were shown by the use of a camera and screen. Video also was integrated into the set to allow for different aspects of the story to be told.
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 	Good	The audience, which half filled Traverse 2 was very well engaged in the production which lasted about one hour. A mixture of adults and young people watched the performance.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>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? 	Good.								
<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? 	Free programme with cast and some background information. The programme is aimed at young people and gives very little information about the play. It focuses on the director's reasons for producing the work and also interesting comments from the creative team about what they most fear.								
<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>	Posters in Traverse, information on web-site and in Traverse programme. Information on Visible Fictions web-site.								
Ease of booking and payment	Usual high standard of booking process								
<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? 	Good – 7.30pm								
<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? 	Good								
<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>no</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>no</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	no	Audio description of performances	no
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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	Web-site
	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.