



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:	Birds of Paradise
Venue:	Tron Theatre
Title of Event:	'Beneath You – Spider Girls are Everywhere'
Type of Event:	Performance.
Date of Visit:	28 September 2007
Overall Rating:	<u>Competent</u>
<p>This show was a disappointing experience for me, as the company had made great claims regarding 'Beneath You' as a work that would highlight the 'invisible women' caught in the Scottish Justice system. However the show never really escaped the prison of it's own making, and I feel much of what Director Morven Gregor, wanted to say remains hidden too. If there had been a better way of linking the movement related work through a more ambitious design and coherent, passionate script, a more fulfilling experience could have been possible.</p> <p>As It is, 'Beneath You' could only amount to a rather safe and predictable presentation where the performers never transcend the story to shed light on the plight of their intended targets.</p>	
Name:	Steve Slater
	Date: 04 /11 / 07
Specialist Advisor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scottish Arts Council Officer
	<i>Please circle the relevant title</i>

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.	Competent	The basis of this work is indeed intriguing, taking the true-life story of young people in Chile who stole to attain a lifestyle that was beyond their means. However, the overall effect was ineffectual and un-involving
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.	Competent	The production appears from the publicity to be a co-production with the Tron Theatre and forms part of their autumn season programming.
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	The publicity promised a <i>“thrilling production reveals dangerous worlds where loyalties, desires and nerve are tested to the limit”</i> . However I found it to be a rather tame and polite production that did not really carry the weight of desire and love crossed loyalties of complex characterisation to warrant such a statement.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Competent	The performative skills on show ranged wildly from the good (Claire Cunningham) to the flat or hardly written in – especially the role of the private investigator (John Hollywood). Overall, the theatre aspect was very uneven and failed to illicit my involvement in the show to a great extent.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Competent	Balancing out the theatrical element of the piece was the physical theatre / dance work of the spider girls. Again Claire Cunningham was excellent, using her physical skills to great effect on the various angles of the set. However, I still felt unmoved or thrilled by the choreography. This was supposed to be a story about a group of young girls who take to the rooftops to do risk their necks for the sake of some extra cash – yet I never felt that the company were in danger of leaving the ground.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Competent	Again the same problems dogged the script – unevenness in the writing that left some performers scrambling for lines while others seemed buried.

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, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Competent	The sense of unevenness came I feel through a general lack of direction. The three key elements – the script, Movement and the space / set design failed to coalesce into a coherent whole. Director Morven Gregor struggled to keep the performances moving along with the fluidity that the piece required.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Competent	Music seemed to take a back seat in this production, only supporting the scenes and not really playing a great part in the production. The music was recorded sound.
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.	Competent	Again I had difficulty with the design aspect of the production. The set seemed composed of various flat surfaces that vaguely came together to form a symbolic appearance of a building or high-rise tower. However, the design was uninspiring and seemed to prohibit the kind of movement that the production so desperately needed.
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> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>	Competent	Technically, the show ran smoothly enough, with no problems that I could identify. The quality of the presentation to the public was of a professional standard in keeping with the company's profile and that of the co-producing venue.
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>		The audience was of a reasonable size for a production such as this. The company are well established and can generate good audiences for their work. I estimate around 175 people in the audience on the evening I attended. They were supportive of the work, if a little muted in their response at the end.
All	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.	N/A	I witnessed no additional activities on the evening I attended the performance. I saw no evidence of additional work, Though I am well aware of the company's experience in these areas. There was mention of an exhibition relating to the show in the programme, which I assume took place, However I did not see it.
All	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?	N/A	As I did not witness any additional education activity I cannot comment further.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?		

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	The show was a co-production with the Tron and formed part of their Autumn season of programmes. It would seem suitable as the company are Glasgow based and the play was new and fitted with the Tron's position as a venue for such work.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Both the Tron brochure and company material were on display in the venue.
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.	Publicity was on display in other venues in the city and on the companies own web sites.
Ease of booking and payment	Booking was made over the phone. There were no problems with the transaction.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Tron is a centrally located venue noted for it's strong theatre and dance programme.
External signage and signposting	The Venue is well known in Glasgow and while the venue would benefit from more prominent signage – I do not think that this was detrimental to the success of the show.
Internal directional signage	Internal signage was good and clear with a very audible audio announcement that the show was about to start.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The Tron has good access for disabled patrons, With even surface access to the front of the auditorium.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Good. Start time was 8.00pm with running time at just over an hour without interval. There was no problem with this.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Staff at the Tron seems to be very friendly and helpful
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC logos were prominently placed on all publicity material.

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.