



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:	27 September 2007
Overall Rating:	Good
<p>An extremely interesting piece of theatre delivered well through strong visuals, design elements and subtle direction. Overall the script supported the piece well however it lost its edge towards the end and did not fully support some of the characterisations.</p>	
Name: Angela Hogg	Date: 14 November 2007
	Scottish Arts Council Officer

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.	Good	<p>This production arose out of a radio news story about the <i>Spider Girl</i> gangs in Chile. The <i>Birds Of Paradise</i> (BOP) director (Morven Gregor) was inspired by the extraordinary lives of these young women and she made a connection with the young women within the justice system in Scotland <i>whose stories rarely get told</i>.</p> <p>An interesting theme which fits well with the range of work already produced by BOP. Their work often tackles universal social themes linking Scotland with other cultures throughout the world.</p> <p>In my view this production represents a positive development for BOP in terms of quality of production, storytelling and audience development.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	Good	Artist led co-production with the Tron Theatre touring Scotland and Republic Of Ireland.
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see ¹below for guidance</p>	Excellent	<p>BOP is an inclusive theatre company which employs performers and other staff who are disabled, non disabled and from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. Part of their mission is to change negative attitudes to disability by providing career opportunities for professional disabled theatre practitioners.</p> <p>A key aim is for the audience to engage with their work without focussing on the fact that some performers are disabled. Given the high calibre performance of Claire Cunningham and some of Morven Gregor's insightful directorial choices this event achieved these aims to a high degree.</p> <p>Additionally, <i>Stagetext</i> was placed at an angle to fit the design of the set. In my view this supported BOP's inclusive aim with scope to improve attitudes to disability. While at a slant, it was easy to follow – and it looked <i>cool</i>.</p> <p>In terms of the show itself, the publicity contains a quote: <i>We need something that marks us out to</i></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
			<p><i>show we're different- be the thing they want to – be the same – be like me.</i> This is a theme common to young women throughout the world.</p> <p>The performance I attended was full of young female audience members some of whom are in the care system. Some vocal responses throughout the show, as well as huge applause at the end, demonstrated to me that the piece resonated well with this audience.</p> <p>I believe BOP achieved this through successful portrayal of this theme through characterisations, script, design and music which spoke clearly to that audience and engaged their sensibilities.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	Good	<p>Cast: Itxaso Moreno, Claire Cunningham, Julie Heatherill, Jill Riddiford, John Hollywood.</p> <p>Overall I would rate the performances as good.</p> <p>Itxaso Moreno lived up to her reputation as an excellent actor who can deliver edge and enthralling characterisations. This fitted well with the part of Becs.</p> <p>Claire Cunningham's physical articulation and presence was fabulous to watch and added an important dimension to the culture of the piece.</p> <p>Moreno and Cunningham provided a dynamic exchange.</p> <p>Julie Heatherill, Jill Riddiford and John Hollywood's characterisations did not particularly stand out.</p> <p>Heatherill's characterisation did not provide a sufficiently convincing portrayal of someone on the edge.</p> <p>Riddiford is a high calibre actor however I did not feel that she was completely at ease with her role.</p> <p>Hollywood's part was relatively insignificant and therefore did not give him a chance to shine as he has done in previous roles.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Good	<p>Choreographer: Matt Foster.</p> <p>Played a key role in the visual storytelling. Successfully portrayed the dynamic between Becs and Tiffany.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	<p>Writer: Kathy McKean Dramaturg: Nicola McCartney</p> <p>An accessible, witty script which captured the theme appropriately and related well to the young audience present (from comments heard).</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>It successfully uncovered the <i>cry for love</i> which underpinned a need to steal designer clothes.</p> <p>However I believe the script's confidence faltered towards the end when uncovering the dilemma of Becs who wanted to become someone else due to exploitation on the web. The writer seemed to need to spell it out which was at odds with the more subtle approach of other aspects.</p> <p>The edgy dynamic built up in the piece was lost at this point.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	<p>Director: Morven Gregor</p> <p>As outlined the director successfully pulled together a collaboration between visual and text based storytelling, characterisation, design and music to create the culture of the piece which resonated well with the dynamics and dilemmas of the <i>Spider Girls</i>.</p> <p>In particular her choice of Claire and Itaxso worked well in depicting potent young women on the edge.</p> <p>The subtle use of choreography to depict the dynamics between the <i>Spider Girls</i> and the wall climbing was excellent and fitted with a sense of style which permeated the meaning of the piece.</p> <p>The juxtaposition of the <i>Spider Girls</i> to the set enhanced a sense of edge and <i>underground</i> culture.</p> <p>As mentioned above some script choices and characterisations let the piece down slightly.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	<p>Unaccredited taped music provided appropriate symbolism and reflection of youth culture.</p>
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.	Excellent	<p>Designer: Claire Halleran Lighting Design: James Gardner</p> <p>Interesting, set design to depict the world inhabited by the <i>Spider Girls</i>.</p> <p>The overtly stylised depiction of a slanting building reminded me of the <i>Hitchcock</i> approach adding a sense of suspense and danger.</p> <p>Costume was appropriate to the culture depicted. Lighting used effectively.</p> <p>As mentioned <i>stagetext</i> fitted well within the set. The slanting position made it look interesting as well as fitting with the style of the piece.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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>	Good	Technical elements supported the production to a good standard.
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>		A full house including a lot of young women. I could tell that they were engaged throughout. Great applause at the end.
All	<p>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.</p>	N/A	Unfortunately I did not see the accompanying exhibition.
All	<p>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? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?</p>	N/A	

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 worked well in the Tron space.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Tron and BOP programmes, posters, leaflets interpretive material available.
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.	A range of paper based and email pre publicity sent to me. Appropriate website information. The style of the publicity fitted well with the culture of the piece and it would likely have been successful in attracting young female audiences.
Ease of booking and payment	Guest tickets arranged.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Fine.
External signage and signposting	Fine.
Internal directional signage	Fine
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Accessible toilets, entrance, stagetext.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very pleasant and helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Suitably acknowledged on all material/web viewed.

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.