



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: The Tron Theatre & Glasgay!

Venue: The Tron Theatre

Title of Event: 'Tamburlaine Must Die'

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 06 / 11 / 2007

Overall Rating: Competent

Personally, while choosing to adapt and stage Louise Welsh's Novella, is both interesting and challenging as a project. For me, the end product, produced by the Tron and Glasgay! failed to fully exploit the potential held within the story. I found that for me it did not translate successfully to the stage in a way that could make it 'live' an original work in it's own right and of contemporary relevance to today's audience. The end result, while entertaining in parts, could only achieve the status of illustrating what the novella had already achieved, while the play itself remained safely between the covers, ensconced in layers of atmosphere, suggested sexual rebellion and minor intrigue.

Name: **Steve Slater**

Date: **13 / 11 / 2007**

Specialist Advisor **X**

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please circle the relevant title

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	Directed and designed by Kenny Miller, the production looked to emulate the success of his previous productions at the Citizens. However I felt that the confines of the Tron's stage and the complexities of Welsh's Novella had got the better of him this time. The work produced being convoluted and under worked in its transition from the original text to the stage.
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.	Good	'Tamburlaine Must Die' was a good choice to develop as a new play from the novella by Louise Welsh. As a key element in both the Tron's autumn programme and the Glasgow! Festival this had good potential as both a re-assertion of the Trons role as the centre for new writing on the west coast, and solid local links in terms of the artists involved and the festival it took place in.
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 for the production heralded the show as a 'thrilling adaptation' of Louise Welsh's book. However, I found it difficult to find this production thrilling, the actors seemed uncomfortable in their roles, the highly sexualised nature of the work demanding complete abandon to the world invoked – which here seemed coy and a little embarrassed by the acts they were asked to perform.
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 acting and characterisation seemed rather uneven, with some characters better realised than others. John Kazek was strong in the more central role as the older Marlow – however his younger self played by Johnny Austin seemed shrill and two dimensional in comparison.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Competent	No choreography was in evidence during this performance. However the fight scene (directed by Carter Ferguson) had quite a convincing feel to it and was carried off with flare.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Competent	The script seemed to suffer from too little editing of Welsh's original text, at times making the work seem overly wordy and static on the stage. Miller's adaptation seemed afraid to stray from the written page and find a voice of its own. The production for me seemed to suffer because of this.

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	Kenny Miller's direction on 'Tamburlaine Must Die' seemed to offer a somewhat compromised vision of Marlow's world. On the one hand it set out to present the dark, corrupt and sexually adventurous world of Marlow in 1564. But seemed to shy away from the more explicit areas of Marlow's sexuality. This is all the more perplexing as the work was a co-commission in association with Glasgay! It would be interesting to know why, when presenting a sexual act between two men, the director chose to illustrate the act by having it performed by a man and a woman (pretending to be a man). It's as if Miller could not quite find it within himself to push the material all the way and truly bring Marlow and his world to the stage of the Tron. This reservation or reluctance in depicting Marlow's world in extremis seemed to shape and undermine the entire production for me.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Competent	Music was a mix of contemporary (Marlow is seen wearing an ipod in the opening scene) and traditional. It formed an atmospheric dimension to the work, operating in the background only. The emphasis seemed to be on making links between Marlow and today's contemporary artists such as Pete Docherty. The music was pre-recorded.
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.	Good	The set seemed to have been wedged into the confines of the Tron space. Sitting at an angle, the overall impression was of weight and decay, much of this done through the colour pallet. There were also subtle references to the 'theatre' with the model of the set also placed on stage. Costumes for the main characters were impressive, however some of the attempts to convey the hedonistic and sexually adventurous times did not always work and some of the minor characters came off looking like refugees from an early 80's New Romantics video.
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	Overall this was a professionally produced production, in keeping with the both the quality of previous Tron productions and also of those presented by Glasgay! I witnessed no technical problems I could identify as a member of the audience and lighting and sound was of a good quality.
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p>		The audience was of a good size, I estimate around 200 people in attendance. There reaction to the work was supportive on the whole, with applause at the end erring towards supportive rather than ecstatic. .

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<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>		
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>	Competent	<p>Though I witnessed no additional interpretive activity on the evening of the performance I did note that the Tron had advertised a writer's workshop in connection with the production.</p>
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	<p>I cannot comment on the outcome of the workshops advertised.</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
Suitability of the venue for the event	The show was a co-production between the Tron and Glasgow! And formed both part of their Autumn season of programmes and a major strand of Glasgow!'s festival. 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.	The production was heavily promoted by both the Tron and Glasgow!
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 its 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. Staff are very visible in what I assume is the new Tron Uniform of Black shirts and red Ties.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The Tron has good access for disabled patrons, With even surface access to the font 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.