



Scottish Arts Council

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

Venue: The Tron

Title of Event: The Patriot

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc) performance

Date of Visit: 28/04/07

Overall Rating (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.)

Poor

I felt that both the style of the text and the staging of 'The Patriot' had a dated feel – with stereotyped characters inhabiting a clichéd setting, which seemed to little echo the 21st century Scotland that it supposed to present. I found the declamatory style of the text off putting – further hindering my intellectual or emotional engagement with the characters or themes of the play.

Name: Rebecca Robinson Date: 29/04/07

Specialist Advisor Scottish Arts Council Officer *Please tick 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	<p>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.</p>	Poor	<p>Opening in the week before the Scottish elections, this appeared to be a timely production dealing, as it did, at least nominally, with party politics in Scotland as well as Britain's involvement in Iraq. However, the play seemed to get lost in an array of overly complicated and over-dramatic plot lines delivered by clichéd characters with little depth that resulted in a script with little focus, relevance or emotional engagement. The conventional staging of the production – also in a clichéd domestic setting - further added to the general sense that this was a piece that was, in critic Joyce Macmillan's words "bafflingly old-fashioned" ('Scotsman' review 1/05/07).</p>
All	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated e.g. 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>	Poor	<p>This was Gregory Thompson's inaugural production as Director of the Tron Theatre. In light of the critical response to the production, this new play was perhaps an unfortunate choice.</p>
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>	Poor	<p>In the programme's 'note from the writer', Grae Cleugh suggested that 'The Patriot' was a metaphorical piece about Scotland growing up and gaining independence. Whilst I found this metaphor problematic, I also felt that if this was the desired 'message' – the script did not convey it. In his 'word from the director', Gregory Thompson wrote of his desire for theatre to be a place where people could be emotionally engaged and "see life a little differently"- unfortunately, for me, this aspiration was not fulfilled.</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>The performers (Juliet Cadzow, Hilton McRae, Claire Dargo and, the playwright, Grae Cleugh) were all, I thought, more than capable performers but all struggled with a script and staging that resulted in stilted performances.</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 - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		N/A
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Poor	‘The Patriot’ is a new play written by Grae Cleugh. As mentioned above, there were a number of reasons why I felt the play didn’t work; including the stereotyped characters, clichéd setting and overly complex narrative. However, it was perhaps the declamatory style of the text that most prevented any intellectual or emotional engagement with the characters or themes of the play.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Poor	The director (Gregory Thompson) staged a very literal interpretation of the script, which perhaps highlighted the texts shortcomings and added to the overall dated feel of the piece. Though I thought the play was well cast, the actors looked at times uncomfortable - often having to play scenes which seemed to have little emotional truth and which appeared as merely excuses to move the narrative along. The production was, I thought, on the whole unimaginatively and, at times, quite clumsily blocked (for e.g. when Tom attempts to run after Paul and then suffers a heart attack).
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Competent	A couple of pieces of pre-recorded music were used – neither of which appeared to me to fit particularly comfortably in the production.
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	The set (designed by Lisa Sangster) comprised 3 large, square ‘pallets’ placed at angles on top of each other. The lower palette contained water, the next grass and the top one, the playing area, a traditional living room scene - the design, I presume, suggesting the idea of Scotland as an island surrounded by land and sea. However, from where I was sitting (in the balcony area) it was hard to make out the water and grass and the focus was on the living room. With the un-stylish leather sofas and suspended shelving unit the living room set, again, highlighted the dated feel of the production. The set also, I felt, created a limiting and awkward playing area. The costumes, too, didn’t seem to add to the production. The lighting states were limited – providing cover rather than being intrinsic to the production.

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>	competent	There was little in the way of technical additions to the production – with limited changes in lighting states and the pre-recorded music used only at the beginning of each act. Sound and lighting cues all appeared to be professionally presented.
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>		There were approximately 160 people in the audience – mainly from the over-40 age range. The audience were mainly attentive throughout. However, I did overhear some negative comments during the interval and not all audience members returned for the second act. At the end, there seemed to be a mixed response – while there were some clearly appreciative audience members, overall the applause was muted.
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>		A post-show discussion, with the writer and cast, led by Keith Bruce, was advertised on the website for the 3rd May.
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 production was purpose-built for the Tron theatre and, therefore, it seemed a suitable venue for the event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There were a few large posters in the foyer as well as flyers and the seasons programme brochure. In the bar foyer there was a display of production shots.
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.	The production was advertised in the press and on the Tron's website. The information contained in leaflets, website etc was brief but informative.
Ease of booking and payment	No problem
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Tron is an easy location to find in Glasgow's city centre and is accessible by bus and underground as well as being close to a number of train stations.
External signage and signposting	No problem
Internal directional signage	No problem
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The venue seems to be easily accessible for disabled people. The website advertised 1 audio described and BSL performance and another stagetext captioned performance.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The production began at 8 pm and finished at approximately 9.45 pm – this seemed an appropriate length and timing. However, I did think that the second act – running at only 30 minutes – was a little short and that the interval was not really necessary.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	All the staff were friendly and efficient.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The SAC were acknowledged on all publicity material that I was aware of.

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.