



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:	Tron Theatre Company
Venue:	Tron Theatre
Title of Event:	Defender of the Faith by Stuart Carolan
Type of Event:	Performance
Date of Visit:	25th February 2009
Overall Rating:	<u>Good</u>

For me the experience of watching 'Defender of the Faith' was to see a company and Director marking time, consolidating strengths, affirming place and position with their audience by producing a fairly straightforward play that revolved around a small interrelated cast of characters playing out their inter-personal issues on a canvass which tried to paint a bigger political picture and carry some form of universal message. That the play could not provide all the answers and transcend its limitations probably lies in the unwieldy and somewhat tired / dated script allied with the feeling that we had visited these issues before in previous productions with the director.

Name: **Steve Slater**Date: **06 / 03 / 09**Specialist Advisor 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	While the play aims to deal with big themes and serious subject matter (the execution of IRA informers) it suffers from an inability to transcend it's own localised setting to move the story beyond that of the hand –full of individuals involved in the story. For me this was the visual equivalent of an afternoon play – a little too cosy in its own self awareness and importance.
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	In terms of programming vision, 'Defender of the Faith' can be seen as a further step in Andy Arnold's Directorship of the Tron. Establishing a new house style while maintaining firm links with the Tron's play writing history. While it may not be the strongest production the Tron Theatre company have produced in recent years in heralds a positive drive to assert direction and purpose into the Tron's programme.
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	Good	I feel that the play succeeded in what it set out to do – Andy clearly states that he see a direct connection with his previous works at the Arches – while mapping his out his intentions to politicise the Tron's programme and give it a place and a voice once more in Scottish playwriting and production
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Good	Overall the performances by the actors were good, with no particular stand out performance to note. Though I did feel that the actors were a little restricted by the weaknesses in the script itself.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/A	No choreography was utilised in the production.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Competent	I found the script the most disappointing aspect of the production. I'm not certain people speak like this – even in rural Ireland. This in turn gave the production an unreal atmosphere that jarred with the realistic / documentary feel that I suspect the company were aiming for both with the performances and set.

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	I felt there was a small element of hesitancy in the direction for this production – Maybe there was a lingering desire to hang on to previous glories and strengths and not make the leap into new areas / themes which his new position can clearly give him the opportunity to explore at the Tron. I'm not sure. In the end all the boxes seem to be ticked here, admired playwright, strong cast and director, well designed set & lighting but the production failed to ignite and excite in the way that it should.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Competent	Music / sound in this production is used to produce atmosphere for the production (very much like TV and radio) and did not take a front seat in developing or moving the show on in any form.
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	I'm always amazed by how much you can pack onto the Tron stage, The set for 'Defender' designed by Jessica Brettle is no exception, cramming house, farm yard, mountain and back projected British Army lookout post into the mix. Lighting was subtle and in keeping with the overall production. Though I assume if this were to tour it would need to be slimmed down a little.
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	Though the play provided few surprises or insights beyond those presented, overall the production was strong on quality in terms of the performances and production design. The play running smoothly to one and a half hours without interval.
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 though not ecstatic did obviously enjoy the production and gave it a warm reception at its end. I estimate that there were around one hundred and twenty people in the audience of mixed age and backgrounds. Though there was clearly a school / college party in attendance on the night I attended - which probably gave the overall audience a younger average than is usual.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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.	Good	I am unaware of additional interpretive activity linked to this production – though it was good to see some information, both on the 'Troubles' and their relation to the play and a companion statement by the director in the accompanying leaflet handed out at the beginning of the show.
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? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?	Good	As stated above, some work is being done to give access to schools. However I do not have additional information to comment further.

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 event took place at the Tron – the company's home venue.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Good information contained in the flyer supplied with the show.
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.	Good coverage in the press and strong web based media linked to the show on the Tron Web site.
Ease of booking and payment	Payment was made by phone and I had no problems with the booking.
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. Staff are very visible in the 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 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 7.30pm with running time at an hour and a half 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.