



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

This evaluation is intended to represent an objective aesthetic judgement. **Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences wherever possible.**

Artist/Company: Borderline Theatre Company

Venue: The Tron Theatre, Glasgow

Title of Event : The Ducky by D C Jackson

Type of Event: Theatre

Date of Visit: Thursday 21st May 2009

Overall Rating: Very Good

(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – ie 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.)

This was a very good production of an extremely funny play. It engaged the audience of ages 14 to 80 with its pacy comedy and quick fire one-liners, but still managed to deal with some more serious issues with compassion and insight.

Name: Nikki Axford

Date: 7th June 2009

Specialist Advisor

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 on 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 future 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:

Very poor- standard falls well below what is acceptable.

Poor - not well conceived and executed

Satisfactory

Good - well conceived and executed

Very Good – well conceived and executed to a very good standard

Excellent – Inspiring and executed to an exceptionally 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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of ideas if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons 	Very good	<p>This was a pacy comedy, full of excellent one-liners, but which tackled serious issues of relationships, life decisions, teenage sex and pregnancy, without ever being patronising or general. The characters, all young people, were sympathetically drawn and portrayed, which is refreshing as they are too often given a bad press. Cooney, the ned was the least developed character – we were told that he had a softer side, but we didn't really see it. It is one of the best Borderline shows I have seen – sadly, I missed the first play in the trilogy, but I look forward to seeing the third part.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	Very good	<p>Borderline has always championed popular theatre that appeals to a broad audience. Whilst <i>The Ducky</i> might be more directly targeted at a younger audience than has been usual for this company, it was appropriate for all ages – parents, grandparents and anyone who can still recall the vividness and intensity of youth.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? How well did it communicate the artistic themes? How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Excellent	<p>It was a very successful project and certainly achieved the aim of being “a piece that is funny, touching, entertaining and with a lot of heart.” (Programme note.) It would appear to have been a commission, as part of a trilogy, although this was not specified. It was thoroughly entertaining, but not superficial and dealt with its stated themes of “love and death, families, homecoming and growing-up” (website) with humour and insight.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments. How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience? In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop? 	Very Good	<p>The relatively young cast were excellent. Their comic delivery and timing were first rate and they held the audience through the more reflective passages. The characters were mostly well-rounded and interesting, generally without resort to stereotype, although it was difficult for Jonathan Holt as Cooney to avoid this completely.</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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work original? • How was the space used? • How many dancers were there and how were they used? • How long was the piece? 		n/a
Theatre	Script Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 	Very Good	The script was pacy, punchy and very funny, with plenty of brilliant one-liners which had the audience of all ages laughing out loud. The characters were interesting and whilst familiar types they were not stereotypical. Scenes were generally fairly short, snappy two-handers, particularly in the first half – perhaps the dramaturgical input might have encouraged the development of a few more group scenes. The opening sequence of expletives certainly grabbed the attention of the restless teenagers in the audience and from then on they were gripped by the characters, the narrative and the humour and responded very positively.
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Very good	Direction was good, with excellent comic timing throughout and variations of pace and intensity. It was well cast and presented.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 		n/a
Dance, Theatre	Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the costumes, set and lighting? • How did it work in the venue? • Was it technically proficient? (eg lighting and sound cues, etc). 	Satisfactory	The set looked like a practical touring set, neither adding to nor distracting from the play. It was a basic, non-specific indication of location offering two levels for the actors to work on. The costumes were straightforward and appropriate. Lighting and technical presentation were very good.
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the production/event targeted at a particular audience? • Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? • Were you/ engaged/inspired? • Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired? • What was their response? • Approximately how many people were there? • Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? • Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many? • What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of 		Whilst the production was not targeted at a particular audience its subject matter and script clearly appealed to young people. The audience at The Tron was aged between 14 and 80+ and everyone seemed to enjoy it enormously, including two school/youth groups who were fidgety and uneasy before it started and again before the second half, but they were hooked in from the opening lines and remained engaged throughout. The piece worked extremely well for the broad audiences which Borderline targets. The theatre was 95% full. There was no information on Borderline's website, but there were links to all venues. I couldn't find any information about BSL/captioned/audio described performances. There was nothing obvious on the company's or venues' websites.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were these targeted at specific age groups? 		

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
<p>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route? Are the spaces clean? What were the sight lines like? How big was it? 	<p>The Tron Theatre is a very well-run and well-known venue, well-suited to this event.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? Is there information on the venue's website? 	<p>There were posters at the venue, information on the website and programmes and scripts for sale.</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? What publicity materials are produced? Is it easy to understand? Where can you get the information? Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²? <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	<p>Tron brochure.</p> <p>Posters, leaflets and programmes. The information on the company's website is brief, providing a short taster with basic details only. I would have liked to have found more information about the characters in The Wall and The Ducky.</p> <p>SAC funding is acknowledged.</p>
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>Fine. I didn't particularly like being asked to make a donation when booking, but I guess it's probably an effective way of fundraising.</p>
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? Was the length appropriate? 	<p>A 7.30pm start is standard and seemed appropriate. A small quibble was that the event in The Changing House also started at the same time – a staggered start might have been easier.</p>
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the entrance clearly marked? Is there clear internal directional signage? 	<p>Fine.</p>

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.

Criteria	Comment			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 				
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 		Yes/No		Yes/No
	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	No
	Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	Yes
	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	Nothing on website about access
<p>Customer service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	<p>All staff I dealt with were courteous and efficient.</p> <p>n/k</p>			

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.