



### 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:** Fire Exit/David Leddy (Tron Co-production)

**Venue:** Tron Theatre

**Title of Event:** White Tea

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009

**Overall Rating:** Very Good

This was a deeply moving, sometimes very funny, exploration of love, loss, familial duty and cultural bridge building. The 'search for meaning' in the detailed performance of the death rites and rituals of another culture was beautifully done and the invitation to the audience to drink tea, don white kimonos and share the installation/performance space gave the piece a real feeling intimacy while never feeling threatening or overpowering.

Name: Stewart Ennis  
*Specialist Advisor*

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2009

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"> <li>Quality of ideas</li> <li>if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons</li> </ul>	Excellent	<p><i>White Tea</i> has the surface simplicity, aesthetic sensibility, and attention to detail that has been evident in other David Leddy written shows. (i.e. <i>Home Hindrance</i> and <i>Susurrus</i>). The intelligence, sensitivity and complexity of its exploration of loss, love and betrayal, is also a recurring theme in some of Leddy's other work (above) but here it takes place against the background of cultural <i>difference</i> and the apparent 'otherness' of Japan. This is done with a narrative that, though on, one level, is quite conventional, is also confident, strong, moving and witty and reinforces the impression that Leddy is as concerned with exploring the use of 'text' as much as the use of 'space'. The placing of the audience, within the space, as kimono clad, tea drinking 'guests,' invited to share or witness the unfolding, narrative added to the intensity and intimacy, of the piece,</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation?</li> <li>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>This is a co-production with the Tron Theatre and has just returned from its opening run at the Edinburgh Festival. It fits in well with a rich Tron programme and suggests a continuation of the Tron's interest in exploring its relationship collaborating with more experimental artists.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material?</li> <li>How well did it communicate the artistic themes?</li> <li>How did the event originate e.g. from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission?</li> </ul> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for definition</p>	Excellent	<p>In his programme notes, Leddy discusses the Japanese Buddhist aesthetic ideal of <i>Wabi-sabi</i> as described in Okakura's <i>Book of Tea</i>, as an inspiration for <i>White Tea</i>. Concerned with “beauty that is deteriorated or degraded” and bringing about “a sense of serene melancholy“ Leddy sought to “make a piece that embraced the social and emotional wabi-sabi of family life....'the adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence.”</p> <p>These ideas seem to have been well realised in this piece visually, textually and through performance style, all of which emphasised both difference and commonality., beauty and its fading counterpart, life and death, truth and lies....and the enormous grey area that lies between all of these. In the minimalist beauty of the Japanese dwelling, the ugly reality of Naomi's mother's excrement stained underwear, the Japanese reserve of Tomoko, and the snot faced angry-sad-confused outpouring of Naomi. And in the midst of all this decay and hurt, Wabi-sabi, something honest and beautiful is discovered. The play is artist led, a co-production with the Tron theatre following a lengthy period of research and development by David Leddy.</p>

<sup>1</sup> 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

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<b>Performers/tutors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments.</li> <li>How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience?</li> <li>In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop?</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>Gabriel Quigley and Alisa Anderson both gave appropriately contrapuntal performances that worked extremely well. The 'culture-clash' opposition and misunderstanding and the finding of common emotional ground was well realised physically in the use of ritual and in the open visceral display of strong emotions against its restrained opposite.</p> <p>There were times when there was a level of the heightened emotion on display that felt a little overpowering and slightly repetitious, but the two performers were never less than fully engaging throughout.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<b>Choreography/Use of choreography</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the work original?</li> <li>How was the space used?</li> <li>How many dancers were there and how were they used?</li> <li>How long was the piece?</li> </ul>	N/A	
Theatre	<b>Script</b> Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>new work</li> <li>second productions</li> <li>classics where the original has been substantially changed</li> </ul>	Excellent	<p>David Leddy's script was rich and complex, weaving the various strands of the narrative to great effect. The emotional family drama dealing with love, loss and betrayal was in some ways quite conventional but seeping through this was a fascinating exploration of cultural difference with Naomi's journey an expression of the universal need to make personal sense of loss, and the captivating use of ritual in that process. Douglas Maxwell acted as dramaturg.</p>
Theatre, Dance	<b>Direction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the work well interpreted?</li> <li>Was it well cast?</li> <li>Was it well presented?</li> </ul>	Excellent	<p>The piece was filled with beauty, wit and precision throughout, from the detail of the cremation/bone ritual to the cleansing/purification ritual. The casting seemed just right with the performers possessing just the right amount of contrast and common ground. The offering of tea to the audience felt natural, appropriate and inviting and the direction never seemed to lose sight of its stated themes (above)</p>
Dance, Theatre	<b>Use of music</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the music/ sound used enhance the production?</li> <li>Is it live or recorded?</li> </ul>	Excellent	<p>The culturally rich soundtrack including tracks by Yoko Ono and Western opera was entirely appropriate to the piece, helping to create atmosphere, establish a sense of place as well as supporting the show's themes and increasing its emotional impact</p>
Dance, Theatre	<b>Design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How were the costumes, set and lighting?</li> <li>How did it work in the venue?</li> <li>Was it technically proficient? (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc).</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>Though this performance was viewed from the point of view of a kimono clad 'insider' it would have been equally fascinating to have observed from outside. Certainly the audience, clad in kimonos blended into the intimate white confines of the beautiful minimalist Japanese design. The white kimono worn by performers and 'interior' audience members added to a feeling of lightness that existed even in the piece's darker, heavily emotional moments. At one point it felt that the 'interior' audience were almost too close and when</p>

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>one performer needed to get at something beneath/behind one of the seats there was a slight sense of having stepped outside of the narrative. However, lighting, sound and video projection (of Leddy's own photographic images) all worked very well together contributing to atmosphere and supporting the narrative.</p>
All	<p><b>Quality of Public Engagement</b></p> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the production targeted at a particular audience?</li> <li>• Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants?</li> <li>• Were you/engaged/inspired?</li> <li>• Did the audience/participants appear to be engaged/inspired?</li> <li>• What was their response?</li> <li>• Approximately how many people were there?</li> <li>• Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled?</li> <li>• Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many?</li> <li>• What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event e.g. workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info?</li> <li>• Were these targeted at specific age groups?</li> </ul>	Excellent	<p>The show seemed targeted at a wide audience, and those interested in text based work or site specific would have been equally engaged.</p> <p>The production seemed entirely appropriate to the wide ranging audience present on this particular evening.</p> <p>I was fully engaged throughout and there was much in this show that held me emotionally and stimulated me intellectually.</p> <p>The Changing House theatre was full on this evening.</p> <p>There seemed to be a fairly diverse audience group, and though wheelchair users were not present the show certainly allowed for this.</p> <p>Audio loop is available at The Tron.</p> <p>A programme containing a full performance script together with director's notes was extremely well produced, informative and again, aimed at a general audience.</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
<b>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is it easy to find?</li> <li>Is it on a main transport route?</li> <li>Are the spaces clean?</li> <li>What were the sight lines like?</li> <li>How big was it?</li> </ul>	<p>Tron easy to find and on main public transport routes.</p> <p>Space was clean, and site lines (though I was inside performance space) were good. The space was the ideal size for this site specific piece.</p>
<b>Information/ interpretive material at venue–</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event?</li> <li>Is there information on the venue's website?</li> </ul>	<p>Posters, programmes and brochures all contained information on the show.</p> <p>Venue web contained useful, easy to understand info.</p>
<b>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in?</li> <li>What publicity materials are produced?</li> <li>Is it easy to understand?</li> <li>Where can you get the information?</li> <li>Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding<sup>2</sup>?</li> </ul> <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>Even was listed in Tron brochure and web and on the company website.</p> <p>Other publicity material included leaflets all of which was easy to understand.</p> <p>Information is also available on the David Leddy website.</p> <p>SAC acknowledged where appropriate.</p>
<b>Ease of booking and payment</b>	<p>Booked online. There were no problems.</p>
<b>Timing of the event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?</li> <li>Was the length appropriate?</li> </ul>	<p>The show started at 7.45 pm lasted for about 1hr20minutes and this seemed quite appropriate.</p>
<b>Signage and signposting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the entrance clearly marked?</li> <li>Is there clear internal directional signage?</li> <li>Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops?</li> </ul>	<p>Entrance is clearly marked with clear internal signage.</p> <p>Was not aware of Braille signage but audio loop available. .</p>
<b>Access and provision for disabled people</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event</li> </ul>	<p>Yes</p>

<sup>2</sup>

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			
Please add in any additional comments below the table <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue?</li> </ul>		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	NO
<b>Customer service</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)</li> <li>If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers?</li> </ul>	Front of house/catering staff friendly and helpful throughout			

### 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.