

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: Lu Kemp

Venue: Tron Theatre (Changing House)

Title of Event: One Thousand Paper Cranes

Type of Event: Drama (Children's)

Date of Visit: 17th October 2009

Overall Rating: Satisfactory

(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.)

I was very disappointed with this show. It is a moving story which could provide lots to talk about for older children, but I found the production somewhat unfocussed, with the script and subject matter probably more suitable for the target age group (8+), but the direction and style of presentation more suited to a slightly younger audience than that targeted.

Name: Nikki Axford

Date: 27/11/09

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 	Good	It's a lovely and powerful story and should be a good way of introducing children to the concept of death. It was very simply directed and designed, but was not entirely successful in addressing the issues.
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. 	n/a	There is no company credited, although the director, designer and performer Melody Grove have collaborated on other projects according to the WebPages.
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>	Satisfactory	<p>I found this production lacking in focus. This was perhaps not helped by the audience which comprised children mainly younger than the advertised target age group (8+). At first, seeing so many younger children, I was disappointed that I had not taken my 4 year old niece, but later realised that this was the correct decision.</p> <p>The webpage says “This is a show about two friends trying to make sense of life, death and other matters.” In my view, it was only partly successful in communicating these themes to the children in the audience.</p> <p>Sadako's story is outlined on the WebPages, but there is no further information here or in the programme about the aims of the project.</p> <p>Abigail Docherty says on the webpage that she wrote the play after developing the idea with director Lu Kemp.</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	Veronica Leer and Melody Grove were both convincing in their roles and handled the character changes quite well. They engaged with the children and coped well when some of the younger ones stopped listening and started, uninvited, to participate.

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 	Satisfactory	<p>The children's voices were lively and convincing; less so the adults, even as seen through children's eyes. I don't think the children present followed all the character changes, but that was probably because they were mostly younger than the target audience. I was extremely disconcerted by the portrayal of the matron as a horrible person, wielding a terrifying syringe, which she used forcibly, and thought this was really out of order for this age group. Sure, she is later revealed to be a frustrated trapeze artists and adults and (much) older children understand that she is dissatisfied with her job, and this gives them a cheap laugh, but I'm not sure how children are supposed to understand this complex emotional back story. And, by the time she rips off her uniform to go and join the circus, the image of hospital as a frightening and unpleasant place where adults are nasty to children has already been well established. I hope none of the children who saw the show have to go into hospital in the near future. In addition, I wasn't convinced that the script had anything to say about death and dying as Sadako just disappears in the end. It would provide stimulus for discussion though.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Satisfactory	<p>The performance space was used quite well, but there was some action on the floor at the front which couldn't be seen by everyone, including me sitting at the back on a low bench, so higher than those on the floor. It was energetic and pacy, but the style of presentation seemed more suited to younger audiences than the script.</p>
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	<p>To be honest, I can't remember any music, although the programme credits Danny Krass with Sound and Music. Perhaps that says enough.</p>
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	<p>The design was absolutely basic and in my view could have been more imaginative. The only real design moment came at the end when the paper cranes were hoisted above our heads. This was slightly clumsy and should have been a moment of magic. There were very basic costume additions to indicate a change of character, but the transition process might have been facilitated by a more distinctive costume change.</p>
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? 	Satisfactory	<p>There were approximately 20-25 in the audience, evenly split between children and adults. It was a standard, homogenous, white, middle-class non-disabled audience.</p> <p>The event was targeted at the over 8s. At the performance I attended, most of the children were significantly younger than this – between 4 and 6 I'd guess – with 2 or 3 nearer to 8 years old. The</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? • Were these targeted at specific age groups? 		<p>younger ones were mostly engaged by the visuals, but were not following the story and became distracted in the last 15 minutes or so by the paper cranes. I'd have thought that the script and performance style would have suited 6-8 year olds, although the subject matter would probably only really have been understood by the older children in this range. For children much above this age, I'd have thought the style and dialogue would probably have seemed a little too 'CBeebies' for them. It might have been nice if the children, or anyone, could have helped make some paper cranes, but this is quite a difficult process.</p> <p>There was an enthusiastic response from the adults in the audience, but I got the impression that the audience included several friends of the company members.</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
<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 is centrally located. The Changing House is a good, small venue for this scale of event. Seating was on the floor. Most of the action was visible, but there was some on the floor which was not.</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 was a hand out at the end with a diagram of how to make a paper crane. I would not have been able to do so from these instructions, but having watched the YouTube demo on the webpage, it is quite complicated.</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>I had seen it advertised in the Tron brochure, which is well produced and easy to follow.</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																
Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.																	
Ease of booking and payment	The ticket was reserved for me. I completed the booking by phone.																
Timing of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? • Was the length appropriate? 	2pm – fine.																
Signage and signposting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the entrance clearly marked? • Is there clear internal directional signage? • Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 	Could be clearer.																
Access and provision for disabled people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event Please add in any additional comments below the table <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<table border="1" data-bbox="571 757 1251 1279"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>No</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>No</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		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	Yes
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Customer service <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? 	Good																

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.