



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:	Tron Theatre		
Venue:	Tron		
Title of Event:	Bliss & Mud		
Type of Event:	<i>two 60 minute performances</i>		
Date of Visit:	8th May 2009		
Overall Rating:	Very Good		
<p>Two contrasting but complementary black comedies played well in quality stripped down off-the-wall productions.</p>			
Name:	Sandy Maxwell	Date:	12 May 2009
<i>Specialist Advisor</i>			

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 	excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andy Arnold's idea to bring two Scottish premiers under a Tron Stripped banner brings a black comedy double bill of a US and a Canadian author. This successfully reinforces the Tron's current reputation in being an innovative producing company, as one reviewer succinctly put it "quality off-the-wall theatre on a budget" Keeps up the excellent track record of Andy's first year at the Tron
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. 	excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two good additions to a varied Spring/Summer programme at the Tron Not part of a festival
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 e.g. from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Very good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bliss is billed as a "a savagely surreal attack upon contemporary culture's obsession with real life tragedy and celebrity worship" while Mud is "a taut, funny and cruel dissection of the battle of the sexes.... in its depiction of a suffocating emotional triangle" Both are almost entirely successful in those aims with two tight 60 minute productions giving a very satisfying and entertaining evening. Well Scottish premiers
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 professional actors well known on the Scottish stage For Bliss the threesome of Gabriel Quigley, Grant Smeaton & Mark Prendegast who perform Mud are joined by Pauline Goldsmith. In bliss they work well as a chorus delivering an initially static then more and more maniacal recounting of the witty and clever text. For Mud the three characters are developed more intensely following a side splitting introduction to white trash life in the American South. Throughout both the cast work well together and off each other.

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	Bliss is a translation by Caryl Churchill of script by Olivier Choinière. Mud is by Maria Irene Fornes. Bliss is the cleverer text with a fast pace of chorus style delivery. It has several layers first in observing the fate of the pop star through the observations of her fans then relating it to some of their own experiences. At times it flowed a bit too fast to catch all the nuances but the attack on celebrity obsession came across as a biting comedy. Mud was a more contemplative piece once the play got through the obvious but hilarious references to sex with pigs the plight of Mae 's attempts to better herself are accurately observed.
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	very good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes the direction by Andy Arnold in contrasting but complimentary styles works well with the humour and underlying comments both forcibly brought forward. • A good ensemble work • yes
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 	Good	Céline Dion tracks are the only possible and appropriate soundtrack to Bliss given the content of the play and evocative slide guitar is predictable and entirely successful in Mud.
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? (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc). 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic box on a raked stage was used for both plays with the interior decor changing from upmarket boutique to shabby shack. Costume was not extravagant in keeping with the stripped back nature of the production. Lighting by Mark Hughes was particularly effective especially the posed tableau's at the end of each scene in Mud which were highlighted by a slow fade. • Yes
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was the production targeted at a particular audience? 2. Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? 3. Were you/ engaged/inspired? 4. Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired? 5. What was their response? 6. Approximately how many people were there? 7. Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? 8. Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the 	good	Performing Arts/Education - <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tron theatre going audience 2. Yes 3. Yes 4. Yes 5. Variable from chuckles to slide splitting laughter during the earlier parts of Mud and warm applause at the end of both plays 6. Around 70 7. No 8. There was one audio described & BSL interpreted performance in the run of 9 9. None apparent 10. N/A N/A N/A

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>run/tour/? If so how many?</p> <p>9. 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?</p> <p>10. Were these targeted at specific age groups?</p> <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led e.g. one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix? • Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development • What learning/skills development took place? • What was the quality of the art produced by the participants? • Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project? • How were participants recruited? • Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project? <p>Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?</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								
Location and suitability of the venue for the event <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is it easy to find? 2. Is it on a main transport route? 3. Are the spaces clean? 4. What were the sight lines like? 5. How big was it? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. Yes 3. Yes 4. Yes 5. 0.01701 Hectares 								
Information/ interpretive material at venue— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? • Is there information on the venue's website? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free programmes leaflets and Tron season brochure available as well as posters and badges for the production. • Good info on Tron website as well as excellent use of Facebook, You-tube & Twitter to promote the plays 								
Publicity/ pre-publicity – <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 Funding²? <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mailing from Tron and leaflets at previous visit to venue, posters around Glasgow, e news from Tron and editorial coverage in Herald, Scotsman & List amongst others • See above • Yes • Tron Website, S1 website, box office, List • Yes 								
Ease of booking and payment	Credit card booking on internet was not automatically acknowledged by the system but a phone call to box office confirmed the booking								
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? 	Timing for both was good either on there own would almost have been an acceptable evening entertainment but both together was a well balanced & complete evening.								
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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • Yes • Some 								
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 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/ No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/ No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>Yes 1</td> <td>Audio description of</td> <td>Yes 1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	Yes 1	Audio description of	Yes 1
	Yes/ No		Yes/ No						
BSL interpretation	Yes 1	Audio description of	Yes 1						

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 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? 			performances	
	Captioning	no	Lift/ramp	yes
	Accessible toilets	yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	no
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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Box office & FOH staff very friendly, some of the bar staff are slightly too cool to the point of sometimes not being over helpful to customers. No obviously disabled customers when I was there so can not comment 			

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.