



Scottish **Arts** Council

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: Vanishing Point
Venue: Traverse – Drill Hall
Title of Event: SUBWAY
Type of Event: performance
Date of Visit: 21 August 2007
Overall Rating: Good

Although there were many excellent elements to this production – direction, performers, music – it was ultimately let down by a script which although funny could have done with being deeper in its exploration of the dystopian future. Enjoyable, entertaining and well presented.

Name: Chloë Dear -Specialist Advisor Date: 1 October 2007

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.	Good	The vision of Leith in the future was imaginative – not too far ahead as to be unrecognisable and thus more disturbing as a result. The mix of music, physicality and strange story made this a pleasurable and interesting performance to watch. It was also well done with the skills of the company matching the quality of ideas. Perhaps the story could have pushed us further with its dystopian vision of the future but it was genuinely funny and satisfying. SUBWAY is a strong piece of Scottish work that may not get wider recognition due to the narrowness of its setting. This was the first time that I had seen this company's work and I really am kicking myself for not having been to see them before.
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.	Good	Part of the Traverse's festival programming which showcases good Scottish productions amongst its programme of mainly new writing. This certainly fits within that context. The production originated with the company but has the support of a range of venues and funding bodies.
All	Success of event against stated aims -in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.	Good	This was billed as a dystopian musical adventure and it was.
All	Performers/tutors -technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.	Excellent	The two performers were both excellent and were a joy to watch. Sandy Grierson was immensely engaging, confident and drew the audience in. He certainly is a man to watch. No less talented but perhaps without the same wow factor was Rosalind Sydney who did a good job of convincingly presenting a range of characters.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography -originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Excellent	There were no actual dance pieces within the structure but comment needs to be made on the use of physical movement within the production. This was confidently done and fully integrated within the piece, adding to the whole rather than being a distracting side element.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	My key reservation with this production is the script. Although I enjoyed the humour and local references (I live on the north side of Edinburgh), it could have done with going deeper. I am not sure where this could have taken us but I think it could have presented us with more questions

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			about the near-future, even if tangentially by providing more reference points. Having said that, I liked the physical language and dynamism of the narrative. And I did laugh lots at the knowing humour "Clooney, pish actor, great president".
Theatre, Dance	Direction -Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Excellent	The casting was top-notch on all fronts. The use of just two actors worked well with one playing multiple parts. How the band was used was excellent (see below). The story rattled along with dynamism and strong physical interpretation that fitted the narrative and greatly add to it without pretence. Presentation was not hugely ground-breaking but it is a great piece of touring theatre that is easily staged.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Excellent	The use of the band as a chorus has been done before but this was an outstanding example of how to do this. At times this was very funny and the line "Fleur, fastest barmaid in Leith" will stay with me for some time. The chorus mimicked the actions of the two main performers and created some clever sound effects. It really felt as though the musicians were in tune with the action on the stage and responding to it rather than providing a backdrop / additional element to the performers: well integrated and not pretentious.
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	Since there are fast turn-arounds demanded of any production in a Fringe venue, the design had to be kept simple and easily set-up / taken down. This necessarily restricted the set and thus was not particularly fancy but fit the purpose of the production – it did not need more. I understand that the original layout of the set was for a more front-on presentation – here it had a curved frontage and whoever it was that had to fit the set into this unusual format did a good job. The use of overhead projection was a nice touch.
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement Performing Arts -technical presentation of the production	Excellent	No problems and the sound was well balanced between the band and the performers, a feat in itself!
All	Audience Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction		Appropriateness – this is a production for a general audience. My one point is that some of the humour is lost on audiences who do not know the part of Edinburgh in which it is set. Platinum Point means nothing / little unless you have seen this modern monstrosity rising up from the shores of the Forth. The venue was more than half full – around 100+ in the audience. It was well received.
All	Additional Interpretative activity	n/a	

2. Management of Event

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	Finding a suitable venue during the Edinburgh Festival is almost an artform in itself. The venue was fine although I am not sure of how the width of the venue fitted the design – whoever converted it into this wide format staging did a good job!
Information/ interpretive material at venue -programmes, displays etc.	Basic but sufficient programme provided.
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.	It was hard to spot SUBWAY publicity in the overwhelming volume of general festival material. The Vanishing Point website is clear and provides adequate information about the current production and others in its repertoire. www.vanishing-point.org
Ease of booking and payment	Straight-forward and easy through normal Fringe routes
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Venue is central but not easy to find, as it does not operate year-round. The entrance to it was squeezed between two shops and easily missed. However, this being the Fringe, these things are acceptable.
External signage and signposting	External signage was small.
Internal directional signage	Fine.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Fine
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Length was standard. Timing was of course down to festival demands so in the middle of the day which was not so convenient.
Customer service -quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Fine.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ¹	Scottish Arts Council logo features on the programme for the production.

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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.