



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, co-production with NTS
Venue:	Citizens' Theatre
Title of Event:	Little Ottik
Type of Event:	performance
Date of Visit:	29/05/2008

Overall Rating: **Good** Adapting a film which has strong elements of both black humour and grotesquery would seem like a perfect match for Vanishing Point, who excel in these areas with their own brand of surreal and visual storytelling. The film is seriously surreal and I wonder if the production could have been delivered in an even more exaggeratedly surreal manner, which would have allowed the company to fully exploit the story's potential. That said, it was an effective and highly imaginative production.

Name: Jaine Lumsden Date: 29/08/2008

Scottish Arts Council Officer

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.	Excellent	Adapting a film which has strong elements of both black humour and grotesquery would seem like a perfect match for Vanishing Point, who excel in these areas with their own brand of surreal and visual storytelling. I am very familiar with the company's work which is consistently good or excellent. Vanishing Point's work typically has very strong integration of all elements (design, action, script, music etc) and in some past work this has been more evident. The base material is seriously surreal and I wonder if the production could have been delivered in an even more exaggeratedly surreal manner, which would have allowed the company to fully exploit the story's potential. It would be interesting to know if this aspect of the production was developed as it continued to tour.
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.	Excellent	The idea was initiated by Vanishing Point, who subsequently received co-production support from NTS. This allowed Vanishing Point resources to produce on a larger scale and fits extremely well with NTS' programme of supporting and/or co-producing high quality Scottish companies.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes. Education events – see ¹ below for guidance	Excellent	There were no identified aims for this production as such. The company aims "...to create evocative stories told through a distinctive visual language, combining an often physical performance style with inventive design, projection and animation." This production achieved these in a highly imaginative way.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Good	This was a strong ensemble cast on the whole, with Sandy Grierson in particular giving an emotionally compelling performance as he gradually becomes more bewildered as he tries to cope with his wife's obsession. A special mention should be made of Rebecca Smith, whose character was central to the piece. This was an extremely challenging role for a young actor and her portrayal was at times entirely convincing. However, at times her delivery seemed a little forced and seemed to slip into a declamatory style at odds with the rest of the

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
			cast and the production as a whole.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		N/A
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	Based on the film by Jan Švankmajer, adapted by Matthew Lenton, Sandy Grierson and the company. I have never seen the original film, so can't comment on the adaptation as such. Structurally this was interesting and ambitious. The device of using the little girl as narrator, then slipping in and out of the action gave a suitable sense of unreality and playing with what's real. The fairy tale running throughout the piece added a interesting element, which perhaps could have been expanded on? The ending posed a question as to what had actually happened – which was clever and intriguing.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	By Matthew Lenton. The set, space and props were all used effectively to tell the story in a deceptively straightforward manner. Deceptive because there was nothing in this piece that was quite what it seemed and Lenton's direction emphasised this in at times quite subtle ways. The initial use of the animated puppet Ottik was skilfully handled, creating a sort of fascinated horror. The impact of the later puppets, perhaps inevitably, had less of a dramatic impact.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Excellent	Sound design by Christopher Shutt, which was very atmospheric and appropriate for the piece.
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	<p>Set and lighting by Kai Fischer, projection design by Finn Ross for mesmer, puppetry and animation apparatus by Ewan Hunter, costume by Becky Minto</p> <p>The overall design of the piece was deceptively simple with some lovely touches (eg the freestanding door). The puppetry/animation obviously played a central role and did genuinely create a feeling of horror at times. The projections were quite beautifully produced and provided some of the most magical moment of the production.</p> <p>I have one reservation about the design: the shed that was flown in and out. I found this quite distracting and I could see no dramatic purpose for doing this. Its entrances and exits</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			also had an unfortunate similarity (to me) of Dr. Who's tardis.
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>	Good	Professional presentation of a complex show.
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>		Range of ages, good reaction. (I thought that some of the audience possibly didn't "get" some of the black humour.)
All	<p>Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>		N/A
All	<p>Outcomes of education activity – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?</p>		N/A

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
Suitability of the venue for the event	Appropriate
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Free programmes which were well designed.
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.	Citizens' and company's websites, posters, flyers – image effective and appropriate for the piece.
Ease of booking and payment	No problems
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Easily accessible by underground and bus
External signage and signposting	Fine
Internal directional signage	Fine
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Disabled access for people with mobility problems
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Seemed appropriate
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Friendly and efficient
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Acknowledged

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.

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.