



## 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/ NTS**

**Venue: Citizens Theatre**

**Title of Event: Little Otik**

**Type of Event: Performance**

**Date of Visit: 31<sup>st</sup> May 2008**

**Overall Rating: Good**

This show (an adaptation of Jan Svankmajer's film; Little Otik) fits very well into a distinctive Vanishing Point oeuvre; the power of their imagination and the beautiful, dark and playful quality of their imagery being as strong as ever. The exploration of deep longing for a child, and the lengths that would be parents will go, internally and externally, to achieve this is given a suitable context here. Together with questions of parental suitability/responsibility, these are current and important themes. The marriage of Grimm, Grand Guignol and realism generally worked very well. A lack of variation of pace at times seemed to work against the piece achieving its full potential.

Name: **Stewart Ennis** Date: 04-06-08

**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 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 show (an adaptation of Jan Svankmajer's film; Little Otik: which in turn references Pinocchio & later, Little Shop Of Horrors) fits very well into a distinctive Vanishing Point oeuvre; the power of their imagination and the beautiful, dark and playful quality of their imagery being as strong as ever. The exploration of deep longing for a child, and the lengths that would be parents will go, internally and externally, to achieve this is given a suitable context here. Together with questions of parental suitability/responsibility, these are current and important themes. The marriage of Grimm and Grand Guignol and realism generally worked; but occasionally the piece lacked pace and at times, slight discontinuity in playing style.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.	Excellent	This is a touring co-production with the NTS. It has allowed Vanishing Point to create a show with higher than usual production values ; positively noticeable in a company as visually rich as Vanishing Point.
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 <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	Excellent	The show is described as an adaptation of Svankmajer's film Little Otik. Having seen the film it succeeds in this very well, extracting the story of the original and while it pays homage to Svankmajer's visual style (his influence is clear and understandable) it still retains the unique qualities that make Vanishing Point who they are
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	Generally all performers worked to a very high standard, working well as an ensemble. The playing style, on the whole was appropriate to the piece and only occasionally did it seem to falter in terms of its continuity.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Good	As is usual with Vanishing Point the use of space and movement is an important feature in their work. Simple images of people strolling across the bleak earth landscape pushing prams was typically simple and extremely effective.

<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 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
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	As is often the case with Vanishing Point, the piece was adapted by the director with the company. The script was never less than effective. Its naturalistic tone seemed intended as a counterpoint to the fantastical story and imagery, keeping it in touch with the very human concerns at its centre. However, at times it could have been a little sharper.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	As ever Mathew Lenton's direction was full of dark beauty and real visual delights, but perhaps a little more conventional than with previous shows. Moments of real horror, filmic in nature, and difficult to create in theatre were handled extremely well. The main problem was a lack of changes in pace and drive needed to sustain a show of this length
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Good	The music and sound was effective throughout particularly adding to the horror and tension of 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.	Excellent	The various design elements of the piece worked very well together. The creation of the highly stylised bleak, earth landscape occupied by ordinary recognizable people, together with projected animation were all right and appropriate and entirely in keeping with the shows concept.
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement  Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).	Excellent	The piece, technically rich and complex, was seamless and unobtrusive throughout.
All	Audience  Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction		The show was originally advertised as for ages 12+ though on arrival was told this had been changed to 16+. On seeing the show, this was indeed an appropriate target age range. The audience were very enthusiastic throughout, responding well to the show's dark humour. The citizens theatre was almost full.
All	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.	N/a	
All	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)?	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	The piece worked very well in this venue.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Programme was well presented an informative.
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.	Posters, news advertising were good and visible and company website was full of good information and easy to negotiate.
Ease of booking and payment	No problems.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	On bus and underground routes.
External signage and signposting	No problems.
Internal directional signage	No problems.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Adequate.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Appropriate to audience.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Good and helpful. Were willing to openly discuss issues of appropriateness of show re: under 16's.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Visible where appropriate.

<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.

**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.