



### 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 / National Theatre of Scotland Co-production in association with the Citizen's Theatre.

**Venue:** Citizen's Theatre, Glasgow

**Title of Event:** Little Otik

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** 28 May 2008

**Overall Rating:** Excellent

*(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. 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.)*

Little Otik was an excellent result of a good collaboration between Vanishing Point and the National Theatre of Scotland. NTS took a risk to support and enable a production of this size and scope, developed from a non-traditional, surreal story and collaborative working process. Not all scenic elements seemed necessary, and some aspects of the story were less successful than others, Little Otik evoked a rich ambiguity of ideas and meanings resulting in a haunting modern fairytale.

**Name:** Tim Licata

**Date:** 16 / 06 / 2008

**Specialist Advisor**

*Please circle the relevant title*

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	Vision and imagination in the selection of Little Otik (LO) to adapt for stage, as well as Vanishing Point's process of creation (programme notes), was excellent. The themes and quality of ideas were intriguing, subtle and bizarre. The piece had clear structure that gave a grounding to a rich ambiguity of ideas and meanings, resulting in a haunting modern fairytale. I have seen VP's work before (The Lost Ones, and Home Hindrance co-prod. With David Leddy). I felt LO allowed the company and director Mathew Lenton, to explore a process of creation on a different scale, in terms of scenic and visual elements. This was a good and challenging development for the company. This production was a risk well worth taking. The process of this creation was well suited to the support the NTS could provide. A weak point was the literal interpretation of 'surreal horror' aspects of the story. At moments I found my attention more drawn to stage effects than to the story, or perhaps the clarity and impact of the story was overtaken by the stage effects. At other moments however, the scenic effects were moving, subtle and a true part of the action.
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	Excellent	Company originated. Vanishing Point approached NTS with the idea to adapt Little Otik. NTS co-produced the project and supported the development in association with the Citizen's Theatre (programme notes). The choice of material was interesting and relevant to contemporary themes (desire to nurture and create, dark secrets kept within, the monstrous children of our wishes and desires...). Though not everything 'worked', I thought the choice of material, process of creation and scope enabled by NTS, was worthwhile, risky and rewarding.
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for guidance</p>	Excellent	<p>Company aims include: "...to create new theatre for modern audiences...evocative stories told through a distinctive visual language, combining an often physical performance style with inventive design, projection and animation. We use the theatre space as a landscape in which remarkable worlds can exist." Little Otik well achieved all of these aims.</p> <p>No specific aims were detailed for this particular production. Little Otik is described as combining, "... dark humour, surreal horror and an unnerving but tender family story." These aims were achieved. Horror is quite difficult to achieve on stage, and I feel that the pursuit of this was a slightly weaker area of the production.</p>

<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

<b>Artform</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.  Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Excellent	An experienced professional ensemble: Pauline Goldsmith, Sandy Grierson, Ewan Hunter, Louise Ludgate, Gary Mackay, Elaine MacKenzie Ellis, Andrew Melville, Rebecca Smith and Ann Scott-Jones. Technical performance standards, skills and ability to communicate and engage the audience were subtle and of very high standard.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Good	All aspects of the stage were well used to good effect; 3 dimensional use of space, contact and interaction with audience, interaction of video and scenic elements. Choreography & movement per se did not stand out as special elements of the piece. Use of movement on stage was good, simple, economic and direct, as necessary. The elements mentioned above have more to do with design than choreography.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	Adapted by Matthew Lenton with Sandy Grierson and the Company. The script was good. Sparse, direct language. The performance was a well integrated visual story, more than a textual story, which was as intended. Subtle use of language to communicate inner states, good use of language in different relationships with audience (direct address, character dialogue, etc.). Qualities of text itself were not a focus.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	Strong, focused, clear direction by Mathew Lenton. Well cast. Good economic use of stage space and very good use and integration of scenic elements. Very strong use of video projection and lighting. Clear direction within a lovely economic set, easily evoking and shifting between emotional states and atmospheres. A Clear choice to natural elements, earth, water drawn out from aspects of the story. It appeared that different strands of the story and images evoked by this piece were intentionally surreal and ambiguous in 'meaning'. I felt there could have been a more clear thread of interpretation brought to the story by the direction. At times the relevance of the story and images lacked clarity. The first half of the play, as the strands of the story were established, was quite subtle and clear. In the second half, as Otesankik turned into a monster, the 'literalness' of interpretation detracted from the audience's imagination and lessened the story. A strong and successful element of the direction was the integration of the scenic, technical and live elements of an extremely complicated production.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Excellent	Excellent evocative Sound Design by Christopher Shutt. Sound design worked with and enhanced other scenic elements in creating emotional environments / atmospheres. Subtle, overt, jarring as required at different moments. Very well done.

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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	Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.	Excellent	<p>High standard of all design aspects from conception to production.</p> <p>Set and Lighting Design by Kai Fischer Projection Design by Finn Ross for mesmer Puppetry / Animation Apparatus by Ewan Hunter Costume Design by Becky Minto</p> <p>Set, video projection, lighting, scenic effects creating 3D qualities and atmospheres, natural elements of earth and water incorporated into design – the integration of all these aspects was particularly well done and impressive. Though worthwhile to have all these aspects of design used to high effect, there were moments when some stage effects seemed gratuitous and I was left impressed by an effect more than the connection it had to the story.</p>
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>	Excellent	<p>Technical presentation of a highly complicated show was excellent. Some minor problems appeared to occur in the the flying rigging near the end, but this was negligible.</p>
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>		<p>Approximately 100 people at this performance, main floor about ¾ full. A range of ages from students, mid-twenties to people in 50s 60s. A good reaction from the audience. Audience appeared engaged throughout. Hearty, sustained applause at end.</p>
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>	NA	<p>I did not know of additional interpretive activities. Performance evaluation.</p>
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</p>	NA	<p>I did not know of educational activities. Performance evaluation.</p>

<b>Artform</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
	curriculum (formal or informal)?		

## 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 Citizen's Theatre was very suitable for this event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There was little information / interpretive materials available at this performance. I felt the experience would have benefited from some more of this type of information. There was a free program, of good quality, which gave information about the origin of the production, involvement of NTS, cast, crew and venue info. But no interpretive information about Jan Svankmajer, the desire to realise this piece, or thematic clues. Not that this information is necessary, but I thought it would have been interesting and enhanced the experience of a quite surreal piece.
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.	High quality publicity materials (leaflets, posters, website). All normal listings in press.
Ease of booking and payment	Easy, professional booking.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Tramway is easy to find, accessible just off main bus route in Glasgow.
External signage and signposting	Fine.
Internal directional signage	Fine.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Good access and provisions for disabled people, ramped access to main auditorium and studio, lift access to above.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	All fine and appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very good, friendly customer service. A very nice welcoming atmosphere established by front of house staff at Citizen's Theatre.

Criteria	Comment
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Scottish Arts Council funding acknowledged on all publicity material and company website.

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<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.