



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
Venue:	Perth Theatre
Title of Event:	Little Otik
Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	Theatre Performance
Date of Visit:	Friday 6 th June 2008
Overall Rating: Excellent	
<p>In every way a high quality production. It is as impressive for the imagination, creativity and expertise that went into creating the stage adaptation as it is for the skills, evident throughout the cast and production team, in execution. The National Theatre of Scotland clearly brought expertise and resources to add to Vanishing Points ambition and creative flair. The combination meant that an artistically risky project resulted in a superb stage adaptation. My only qualm was that I was left feeling that I would have liked to see it in a bigger theatre but in part that may have been to do with the small audience and consequent lack of atmosphere. (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.)</p>	
Name: Stephen Stenning	Date: 20/06/2008
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	<p>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.</p>	Excellent	<p>It is a really imaginative production that manages the impressive feat of turning the surreal film Otesánek into a stage production. It works so well because they have obviously been willing to take risks and to be innovative in the search for theatrical ways of telling the story. They very skillfully use all the talents of an impressive production team and cast to make the adaptation work. I have not seen any of Vanishing Points previous productions but the theatricality and flare for innovation suggested an accomplished highly skilled creative team and one that was comfortable with experimenting and with taking risks.</p>
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	<p>Vanishing Point is a company with an international outlook and a commitment to "telling wonderful stories" and to "taking audiences on adventures into strange and beautiful landscapes". All of which fits with Little Otik. Nevertheless it was a hugely ambitious choice of project for them. The co-production with NTOS, who are used to taking artistic risks, has resulted in a very different touring product for Scotland and a production of international quality. It was an excellent piece of programming for the theatre and, for all that the production felt a little big for the space, it was great to see such an unusual high quality piece of touring theatre in a regional theatre.</p>
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 ¹below for guidance</p>	Excellent	<p>The aim was to adapt Jan Svankmayer's surreal film for stage and to devise a theatrical way of telling the story as a piece of touring theatre. Had I not known that it had been a film before, I think I would have come out feeling that it was the sort of piece that could only really be done on stage and that it demonstrated superbly the value of the live event.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	Excellent	<p>The cast worked really well with each and with the puppets and elements of animation to tell the story. Although there were some very strong individual performances, notably from Sandy Grierson, Louise Ludgate and Rebecca Smith, there was a very clear focus on communicating the story rather than creating cameos or using party pieces.</p>

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 - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	n/a	Not applicable
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	The adaptation was very obviously a collaborative effort and all the problems posed by bringing the film to the stage were answered through the devising process. The script, like the production, was slightly off beat it was also necessarily sparse and for the most part gave the storytelling a pace and reinforced the directness of the storytelling. There were a few moments when an interchange of lines sounded slightly cumbersome.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Excellent	I think this is probably a piece that could very easily have gone wrong. The fact that it didn't was in large part down to the very simple and direct storytelling. For all the grotesque story elements and the surreal situations, it was a very straight-forward interpretation of the story. The design, the puppet and animation and the sound were all made to be part of an extremely well-blended production.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Excellent	The sound design was beautifully and horribly atmospheric. It worked rather like a film score and complimented the production superbly without drawing focus.
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	Kai Fischer's wonderful design was a combination of the simple and direct storytelling when suggesting the Foster's flat and the surreal and atmospheric when it comes to the more heightened elements of the story. The basement and the little shed both had the feel of an illustration for a Grimm's fairytale. Again it complimented the production perfectly and is obviously practical for touring.
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	Very impressive. Personally thought the puppet elements were really well staged without revealing so much of the monster Otik that the production spilled over into the realms of little shop of horrors. Everything was really well done and the drawing of cabbages and babies from the soil revealed cast and crew in perfect harmony. Technically it was so smooth that it was hard to believe that it was a touring show in the venue for only two performances.
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,</p>		I saw it on a Friday night and the auditorium was at best half full. The audience was appreciative and at times enthusiastic but it is a shame to see so relatively few people to appreciate such a high quality piece of work.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>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>It is a touring production and therefore not all the performing spaces will suit it ideally and the high stage and tight proscenium did not help the production and the stage looked a little small for it.</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>	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	It was a quality piece of touring theatre and as such Perth Theatre was a suitable venue for it for all that the high stage and tight proscenium did not help the design.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The programme was informative and free
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.	The websites of Perth Theatre, Vanishing Point and the National Theatre of Scotland all contained useful information about the production. However I would not have been aware that it was on at Perth had I not been asked to see it.
Ease of booking and payment	Very easy I booked over the phone and the system was very simple and straight forward and the tickets were ready for me when I arrived at the venue.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	It is very central in Perth not far from the bus station the train station and central car parks.
External signage and signposting	Reasonably good
Internal directional signage	Good. Very clear.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	There are lifts and disabled toilets and the venue boasts that it is disabled friendly
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	I sometimes wonder whether it would be better to start later when there isn't an interval but the timing fits in with the expected start time at Perth.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very good everyone was very friendly and helpful
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The Scottish Arts Council logo appears around Perth Theatre and the logo also appears on the back of the programme.

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.