



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

This evaluation is intended to represent an objective aesthetic judgement. **Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences wherever possible.**

Artist/Company: Vanishing Point (in co-production with Napoli Teatro Festival Italia)

Venue: The Tron Theatre

Title of Event: Interiors

Type of Event: Theatre Performance

Date of Visit: 14th May 2009

Overall Rating: Excellent

It is an intriguing wordless production and a very different theatrical experience. The skilful directed and the painstaking attention to detail in realising every aspect of the production has produced a fascinating and very accessible form of theatre. The lack of text reveals a subtext through the mannerisms and the reactions of the characters. The audience are always aware that they are interlopers or voyeurs looking in on an intimate and apparently ordinary scene. The effect of peering in on a private scene is superbly manufactured by Kai Fisher's design and Mathew Lenton's direction, and it generates a sense of sadness and poignancy. Although there are many very comic moments created by exploiting the sense of the unseen observer, the piece communicates a very profound sense of isolation and futility. It is a very elegant piece of theatre that feels fresh and experimental yet very accessible and not at all indulgent.

(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.)

Name: Stephen Stenning **Date:** 2 June 2009
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 on 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 future 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:

Very poor- standard falls well below what is acceptable.

Poor - not well conceived and executed

Satisfactory

Good - well conceived and executed

Very Good – well conceived and executed to a very good standard

Excellent – Inspiring and executed to an exceptionally 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of ideas • if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons 	Excellent	I have seen the company's work before, most recently Little Otik. They are an inventive company that have created a distinct and very visual style. This production revealed a very ambitiously different approach to creating a piece of theatre. The starting point was a Maurice Maeterlinck play that the creative team explored developing a whole new scenario around the idea, within the original play, of observing human behaviour from a distance. The idea of the audience observing events from a distance and being entirely removed as if standing outside a window was exploited imaginatively and skilfully.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? • If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	Excellent	It was an exciting development of the company's work and an ideal piece for the Tron's programme. The piece was a co-production with Napoli Teatro Festival Italia and Traverse Theatre and that combination of interests and talents has helped to create a significant piece of theatre that will work in different contexts and will resonate in different cultural settings.
All	Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? • How well did it communicate the artistic themes? • How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Good	The aims for Vanishing Point suggested in the programme include creating work for national and international touring, to use “inventive design, projection, music and animation to create landscapes in which remarkable stories can exist”. Interiors definitely succeeds in creating a landscape of its own and very elegantly and extremely expertly combines design, projection and music within the performance although, it seemed to me, that part of the point of the piece was that the story was not remarkable. The company sought to use a simple story in order to explore the idea of people watching through a window and exploring human behaviour without being able to hear what is being said. The idea is very fully and cleverly explored within a piece that feels like a rounded play for all that the story elements are a little ‘tacked on’.
All	Performers/tutors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments. • How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience? • In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop? 	Excellent	The performers were very obviously accomplished and the multi-national nature of the cast did not reveal any inconsistencies or variations in approach or style. They worked together beautifully and very subtly ensured that the audience focus was always where it needed to be. It was a very exciting ensemble including familiar faces such as Andrew Melville and Myra McFadyen alongside Italian and Serbian cast members. The actors had to communicate solely through their gestures, mannerisms and physical attitudes and for the most part this was achieved

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
			impressively without 'playing' to the audience and thus destroying the sense of characters being watched from afar.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work original? • How was the space used? • How many dancers were there and how were they used? • How long was the piece? 	n/a	No choreographer is credited although there was some very impressive party dancing.
Theatre	Script Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 	Good	There wasn't a script as much as a voiceover which became a monologue from a distanced character. The narration worked well as a comment on the action particularly when it was used to give expression to thoughts reinforcing the attitude of one character to another. Toward the end of the play the narrator character is revealed to the audience and it is clear she is not entirely detached from the characters in the room. However, the sense of resolution comes only from her listing how each character will meet their death and, whilst that effectively maintained the sense of a distanced voice, it felt a bit abrupt.
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	Excellent	It was excellently directed by Mathew Lenton with extraordinary attention to detail. The introduction of each character drew the audience into the room and they were given time to develop an appreciation of the increasing intensity of the interaction between the characters which provided the drama of the piece. The cast appeared to be an ideal one for the piece and the production was elegantly and beautifully presented.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 	Excellent	Alasdair Macrae's sound and music worked seamlessly as a part of the production. From the soundscape of wind across the Tundra creating the sense of an isolated welcoming living-room in cold and inhospitable surroundings to the sounds of the turned-up stereo when one of the characters lets the moment get the better of him; it was an impressive part of the whole.
Dance, Theatre	Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the costumes, set and lighting? • How did it work in the venue? • Was it technically proficient? (eg lighting and sound cues, etc). 	Excellent	Again the design elements were very much integral to the production and served it superbly. Kai Fishers's lighting included no dramatic moments but the contrast of the lighting within the room and the projection that surrounded it created a warm glow that seemed to draw your attention in whilst re-inforcing the sense that you were a long way removed from it. The design skilfully and apparently effortlessly created the sense of a four walled set that the audience was able to look into. Eve Lambert's costumes provided another element of an impressively designed production.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the production/event targeted at a particular audience? • Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? • Were you/ engaged/inspired? • Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired? • What was their response? • Approximately how many people were there? • Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? • Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many? • What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? • Were these targeted at specific age groups? <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led eg one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix? • Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development • What learning/skills development took place? • What was the quality of the art produced by the participants? • Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project? • How were participants recruited? • Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project? <p>Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?</p>	Excellent	<p>I saw the production at the Tron on a Thursday. I would guess that the auditorium was around 75% capacity. The audience were completely engaged with it and enthused by it. It was a difficult audience to characterise as there was a broad mix although I suspect that there was a high percentage of experienced theatre goers. The programme was very interesting and informative about the creation process and the artistic themes of the play. I was not aware of any other materials or initiatives available to enhance the experience. I checked on websites and in the brochure but I could not find mention of BSL translated or captioned productions.</p>

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																
<p>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it easy to find? • Is it on a main transport route? • Are the spaces clean? • What were the sight lines like? • How big was it? 	<p>The Tron is easy to find as it is convenient for rail, underground and for buses and there is parking nearby. The theatre space was ideal for the production.</p>																
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? • Is there information on the venue's website? 	<p>There was a good deal of information on websites as well as posters and programmes at the venue</p>																
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? • What publicity materials are produced? • Is it easy to understand? • Where can you get the information? • Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²? <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	<p>I got information about the production from Vanishing Point's website as well as from the Tron's brochure and from their own website. The information was well-presented and easy to understand. Scottish Arts Council logos appear on the Home page of the Tron website and there is an acknowledgement on the Vanishing Point website. There are also logos in the programme.</p>																
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>I booked over the telephone and it proved very easy.</p>																
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? • Was the length appropriate? 	<p>It started at 19.30 and lasted around an hour both seemed ideal.</p>																
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the entrance clearly marked? • Is there clear internal directional signage? • Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 	<p>The entrance to the Tron is clearly marked and the signage in the building is reasonably clear.</p>																
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>No</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>No</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	No	Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	yes	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or	Yes
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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.

Criteria	Comment			
			alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	
Customer service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) • If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	The staff were all very friendly and efficient.			

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.