



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:	Visible Fictions/East Ayrshire Youth Theatre
Venue:	Cumnock Town Hall
Title of Event:	The Problem Solver's Daughter
Type of Event:	Youth Theatre Sharing
Date of Visit:	24 October 2007
Overall Rating:	Competent
<p>A challenging theme (<i>Community Planning</i>) for a relatively new youth theatre which appears to have been imposed by East Ayrshire Council. While rating this event as competent I also recognise the challenges Visible Fictions faced in terms of artistic scope and experience of participants. Visible Fictions had clearly worked hard with the youth theatre to produce a piece which would represent the participants' ideas, provide a creative process and produce an entertaining showing of work.</p>	
Name: Angela Hogg	Date: 3 December 2007.
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	<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>	Competent	<p>This project arose out of East Ayrshire Council's request for the youth theatre to do a show around the theme of Community Planning (from conversation with the director).</p> <p>In my view this presented the group with an unimaginative, creatively challenging task. The rating of competent represents Visible Fiction's relative success in producing some interesting ideas with the young participants, around this theme.</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>	Competent	<p>Visible Fictions was invited by East Ayrshire Council to develop a programme of Youth Theatre for groups in Cumnock and Kilmarnock. As outlined the council chose the theme for this Cumnock event which I did not view as inspiring.</p> <p>The evening also included a DVD showing some of the Kilmarnock group's work which Visible Fictions has been working on. The aim was to show Cumnock participants, family friends etc the wider range of opportunities which could potentially develop for the Cumnock group.</p> <p>The work presented in the DVD (including a collaboration with NToS) looked very interesting and suggested high calibre experiences for participants with the potential to encourage support for longer term (quality based) development of the Cumnock group. On balance I would view the programming as competent.</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>	Competent	<p>Extracts from Visible Fictions programme: <i>Visible Fictions is working with East Ayrshire Council to develop an exciting programme of Youth Theatre Our ...participation projects enthuse all who connect with them and help participants discover their own artistic potential and inspire their own learning.</i></p> <p>Overall I would view the success against aims as competent. While it is clear that the process had been empowering to participants (and possibly educational) I did not feel that the theme provided a particularly exciting opportunity for participants to discover their own artistic potential.</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

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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>	Competent	<p>The young participants appeared to be enjoying themselves and most of them appeared comfortable with their performances.</p> <p>Some forgotten lines and some lines inaudible at times. There were also a few on stage giggles. Off stage moments involved participants sitting at the side. During that time the participants lacked some focus and discipline eg one girl got up and danced when the DVD was playing (see under direction).</p> <p>Ten performers took part (as stated in the programme).</p>
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.	Competent	<p>The scenario was based around <i>Problem Town which is always full of problems. The official Problem Solver is under pressure due to having to deal with a range of bizarre problems.</i></p> <p>Some quirky, tongue in cheek scenarios were created, driven by a script which was not too wordy and which the young people appeared comfortable with. It appeared as if the dramaturg had appropriately guided and shaped the participants' interpretation of the theme. However, overall, the content was not particularly inspiring.</p> <p>Dramaturg: Liam Hurley</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Competent	<p>As outlined above some of the performers lacked some discipline on and off stage. This reflects on the strength of direction in my view.</p> <p>The staging was not particularly imaginative. On quite a few occasions the performers just seemed to be circling around the stage area. Given some of the <i>off the wall</i> characters and scenarios produced there was scope to present the work in a much more varied and interesting way.</p> <p>Director: Brenda Murphy Assistant Director: Michaela Mullen</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Competent	A musical theatre show for the most part. The young performers threw their hearts into the singing elements. Music: Alan Penman.

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	Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.	Competent	Minimal set (table/chairs/lamp). Props fitted the quirky, tongue in cheek approach to the story (eg giant pencil, glasses, Problem Solver's book). Costumes looked home grown with some imaginative touches. Design/Costume Design: Lynsey Key
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>	Competent	Technical elements adequately supported the event. Stage Manager: Jacqui Howard.
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>Ten performers/participants were listed in the programme. I had counted approximately 14? The audience of over 30 (mainly adults) were very supportive and appreciative.</p> <p>Unfortunately there were few peers in the audience limiting the opportunity available to encourage involvement of new participants.</p>
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	A workshop programme led up to the event which I did not view.
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	Given the nature of this particular event I could not gauge what learning/skills young participants took away with them.

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	Suitable space in Cumnock Town Hall.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Simple programme with background information.
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.	Emails, website.
Ease of booking and payment	A guest ticket was arranged by the company.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Relatively isolated community. Transport provided by the company.
External signage and signposting	Fine.
Internal directional signage	Fine.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Access into the building and performance space. I do not recall seeing a disabled toilet.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance lasted approximately half an hour. The whole event lasted approximately 45 minutes. This was suitable for the event.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Good.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Acknowledged on programme and website.

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.

From Douglas Irvine, Artistic Producer, Visible Fictions

"The creation of Cumnock Youth Theatre has been part of a youth theatre development project in collaboration with East Ayrshire Council.

This particular group was very inexperienced with varying degrees of commitment, ability and enthusiasm. Much time was spent encouraging and dealing with access issues and social challenges within the group and Visible Fictions is delighted that the young people prolonged their engagement to both initially create this production and then were disciplined enough to remount it for this event. The Director has, in our opinion, shown great resolve to be able to not only enthuse the young participants but also to liberate their creative voices, to shape those voices and to present them collectively as a piece of work.

The creative journey the young people have taken has been significant and, although their end product may not rate as 'excellent' when compared to other group's performances, for these young people their achievement and creative development has been superb. It is very important to Visible Fictions that the ideas, vision and imagination are owned wholeheartedly by the young people and not produced by Visible Fictions on their behalf. If an area of thematic study has the potential to connect to people and ultimately to a human dilemma, it therefore has the potential to be developed into an entertaining piece of theatre. These young people have been learning for the first time what it means to explore a situation dramatically, to believe they have a valuable contribution to make and to create and shape a theatrical presentation of their own ideas.

We aim to ensure that productions created by young people are of the highest quality possible within a non-professional/participative framework. The quality of work is undoubtedly much higher when participants are more experienced, as is the case with the other youth theatre programmes the company leads in the region. However, creating a quality experience for participants is crucial to the company and in this particular event, the experience we provided encouraged the group to double in size over the course of the year."