



Scottish **Arts** Council

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
Venue: Regal Community Theatre, Bathgate
Title of Event: Shopping for Shoes
Type of Event: Performance
Date of Visit: 30 April 2008
Overall Rating: Excellent

A hugely entertaining and accessible piece of theatre which combines great writing with strong direction and bold staging: a perfect introduction to intelligent, entertaining theatre for children and young people.

Name: **Laura Tyrrell**

Date:

9 May 2008

Specialist Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

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	<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>Shopping for Shoes is a hugely entertaining and accessible piece of theatre which manages to explore political issues from a uniquely teenage perspective without ever being condescending. The funny and believable script was very imaginatively staged and continues Visible Fictions tradition of creating <i>"innovative and dynamic theatrical productions for young people of all ages that inspire, challenge, engage and entertain."</i></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>Shopping for Shoes was presented at the Regal Community Theatre in Bathgate as part of the theatre programme for children and young people and was the culmination of a 3 month long arts education project organised in collaboration with West Lothian Council's Cultural Co-ordinators. The project involved pupils from 2 West Lothian high schools working with Visible Fictions artists to create a short film exploring the theme of Identity. The film was shown at the Regal before the presentation of Shopping for Shoes.</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>Ostensibly a love story between two 13 years olds, Shopping for Shoes invites young people to reflect on why we define ourselves and shape our identities with brand names and to explore the consequences of this consumerism on other cultures. Visible Fictions say <i>"this accessible piece of theatre is perfect for getting young people to care about global trade issues"</i> and while it achieves this aim it also does something more powerful; it introduces young people to intelligent, entertaining theatre.</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>	Good	<p>The whole story is told by a single performer (Angela Darcy) who takes on all of the roles. While the story was clearly told I felt that this performance was not as strong as previous ones I had seen. On the night this performance was less physically and verbally assured and at times I struggled to hear everything that was said.</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	Good	Very simple movement was well used for characterisation.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Excellent	The script, by Tim Crouch, is a skilful piece of storytelling which somehow manages to interweave a love story with an examination of global trade and consumerism while remaining funny and completely non-patronising. The writing successfully conjured the authentic voice of the teenager and created believable, well-developed characters which the audience could immediately recognise and relate to.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Excellent	The Director's innovative and risky artistic choices – a versatile set of simple cardboard boxes; symbolic representation of multiple characters through shoes; object manipulation to bring each character to life – all combined to create a complex but clearly told and absorbing story. Dougie Irvine's strong, confident direction is deceptively simple but in Shopping for Shoes he manages to say so much with so little.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Good	Appropriate choice of music complimented the story well.
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 deceptively simple set of cardboard shoe boxes was used very effectively and ingeniously throughout to suggest a range of different settings. They were also brilliantly used to “reveal” each new character as they were introduced to the story.
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>	Good	Professionally presented.
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants;</p>		The show was sold out (100) and the audience was made up of young people who took part in the education project and their parents and teachers plus other families and youth groups. The audience - both adults and children - enjoyed the

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>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>performance and responded well to the humour in the script.</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>		<p>See below</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 curriculum (formal or informal)?</p>	Excellent	<p>The performance of Shopping for Shoes was linked to a 3 month long arts education project organised by West Lothian Council's Cultural Co-ordinators in collaboration with Visible Fictions. The project involved pupils from 2 West Lothian high schools working with Visible Fictions artists to create a short film exploring the theme of Identity. The project enabled S1 and S2 pupils to explore many areas of the 5-14 Environmental Studies curriculum, specifically the implications of our actions and behaviours as global citizens. Pupils also reflected on what creates their own identity, how we perceive and how we are perceived by others.</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
Suitability of the venue for the event	The Regal Community Theatre has a 200 seat auditorium with a traditional proscenium arch stage which is suitable for presenting a range of theatre and music performance. However, the building has limited front of house space which can struggle to cope with large audiences.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Programmes for the show were available at the venue.
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 and fliers for the show were at the venue and information on the show and education project were in the venue's season brochure.
Ease of booking and payment	N/A
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The theatre is situated on a main street in Bathgate, 10 minutes walk to the train station. There is a public car park behind the building.
External signage and signposting	There is not much external or road signage.
Internal directional signage	Fine.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Disabled access throughout - ramp to theatre, lift to other parts of the building and a disabled toilet.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Started and finished on time.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Fine
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC funding acknowledged on Visible Fictions print 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.