



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:	Kilmarnock Palace Theatre
Title of Event:	Peter Pan
Type of Event:	Performance
Date of Visit:	31st March 2009
Overall Rating:	Good

‘Peter Pan’ was an exuberant and imaginative production, full of inventive physical play, beautiful imagery and a measure of light and shade appropriate to this particular story. The shadow puppetry was at times exquisite, but seemed to work particularly effectively, when in interaction with the performers, and when the mechanics were revealed rather than hidden. It was very tightly performed and kept the audience of schoolchildren hooked from beginning to end.

Name: **Stewart Ennis**

Date: **08 /04/09**

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>This production was full of the imagination, and inventive physical play that I have seen in previous shows by this company. The ensemble play seamlessly interacted with the minimal set to create those free and abandoned flights of fancy required by <i>Peter Pan</i>. As with other <i>Visible Fictions</i> shows, this production did not shy away from the shadow side of <i>Peter Pan</i>, with loss, sexuality, and the fears of growing up experienced by child and by parent, very much on top throughout. But the quiet stillness and adult concerns in the earthbound bedroom scenes were not to the detriment of the swashbuckling fairy story but rather an enrichment of it. The shadow play and shadow puppetry created with the 'shadow' design/artist team from <i>Teatro Gioco Vita</i> was at times exquisite and felt quite in keeping with the storybook late Victorian/early Edwardian style of the piece. This element of the production seemed to work particularly well when the mechanics of puppetry were clearly revealed and/or the shadows were fully interacting with the performers.</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>This was a co-production with <i>Children's Theatre Company, Minneapolis</i> and one part of a wide range of international touring and collaborative work that <i>Visible Fictions</i> has been involved with over the years. In this production there has also been some extremely fruitful collaboration with the 'shadow' design/artist team from <i>Teatro Gioco Vita, Italy</i></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>This show certainly fulfils its promise in the programme of creating “vibrant, high quality and accessible theatre for both young people and adults alike.” It achieves this by choosing material with depth and complexity of theme, which engages young people and adults without alienating, or patronising, either. This complexity is recognized in the production and also expressed in the educational information, aimed at young people, at back of the programme, which highlights the challenge of “opposites” which the company sees as being at work in <i>Peter Pan</i>; “Young and Old, Boys and Girls, Shadow and Light; Adults and Children.” Its complexity is also expressed in its refusal to adhere to gender stereotypes and norms.</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
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>Described in the programme as ‘storytellers’ the multi tasking (also acting as shadow puppeteers) performers were a tight ensemble, slipping in and out of character –from mother to child to dog to lost boy-with ‘non gender specific’ ease, charm and wit. The performers created clear vivid images, and changes of character and atmosphere often with little more than a simple gesture. Without overstating the darker elements of the story, they well expressed the various feelings of fear and loss inherent in <i>Peter Pan</i>.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc</p>	Good	<p>The use of space and movement throughout the production was a strong feature.</p>
Theatre	<p>Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.</p>	Good	<p>The script adapted by Douglas Irvine (Dramaturgy: Elisa Adams) from the JM Barrie seems to retain much of the formality of the original book and for the most part this is very effective, providing a nice counterpoint to the visual wild exuberance.</p>
Theatre, Dance	<p>Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.</p>	Good	<p>This was a clean, tight production that told the story with pace and clarity, and despite it being only 70 minutes long, did not feel unduly compressed. The cast seemed uniformly right for the various roles they were playing and worked well as a close ensemble. The shadow puppetry sequences worked best when the mechanics of puppetry were revealed (such as the performers operating from the front rather than behind the curtain) and when fully interacting with the performers. On occasion the lengthy stand alone shadows sequence seemed to bring with it a drop in pace. However, on the whole, the shadow puppetry created with in collaboration with artists and designers from <i>Teatro Gioco Vita</i> mentioned already, was mostly exquisite, adding whole other dimension to the play</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.</p>	Excellent	<p>The music (I believe this was composed by American composer Victor Zapanc but this was not in the programme) played an integral part to this show, supporting its various atmospheres and worlds, its flights of fancy and swashbuckling action; altogether generally underpinning the show’s light and shade without consuming it.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.</p>	Excellent	<p>The design team of costume, set, sound, lighting shadow play and shadow puppetry together created a beautiful minimalist piece that was both contemporary and set in the period of JM Barrie’s book.. It allowed the imaginative performer play necessary for this storytelling theatre to work, but without ever being overpowering.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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	Technically the production worked seamlessly with lighting, sound and shadow play and shadow puppetry integrating well throughout.
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>		The audience of mostly school children seemed engaged throughout, entranced by the story and imagery, responding well to the humour and clearly showing their appreciation at the end.
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>	Excellent	There was an after show discussion, but Visible Fictions as usual, are presenting a wide range of educational workshops and activities inspired by <i>Peter Pan</i> , and these can be found on the company website. There was also useful educational material on the back of the programme.
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	The Palace Theatre in Kilmarnock seemed an ideal venue for this production.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	. Programmes were full of useful 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.	The company website is full of useful information and easy to negotiate. It offers a good idea of what to expect as well as the educational aspects of the companies work. Information on the company's previous/future work is also on the website
Ease of booking and payment	No problems
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	On main train line from Glasgow and various local bus routes.
External signage and signposting	Palace Theatre is easily located.
Internal directional signage	Internal signage clear
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Toilets via ramp seem adequate.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	This was a 1.30 pm mid-week performance for schools and seemed quite appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Good, friendly and helpful
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The SAC were acknowledged on all publicity material.

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.