



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 with the Children's Theatre Company, Minneapolis |
| Venue: | Regal Community Theatre, Bathgate Rothes Halls, Glenrothes |
| Title of Event: | Peter Pan |
| Type of Event: | performance |
| Date of Visit: | 4th March 09 (cancelled by company), 24th March 09 |
| Overall Rating: | Good |

very interesting use of shadow puppetry merging into live action but sometimes the thrill of the story and any more serious themes are lost in the busy production.

(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: __Sandy Maxwell Date: _26-Mar-09

Specialist Advisor *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 | 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. | good | A very adept shadow puppetry presentation which is well incorporated with live action. I've seen Visible Fictions using techniques like puppetry very successfully before eg in Big Baby but here the technique although executed to a high standard sometimes overpowered the theatricality of the production to the detriment of telling the story |
| All (if relevant) | Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned. If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. | good | A good choice for schools and family audiences with a familiar story. Would have been ideal for the Christmas season as a considerable improvement on the traditional panto approach often given to Peter Pan. |
| All | Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes. Education events – see ¹ below for guidance | competent | Visible Fictions sell the show as “A thrilling and surprising new production” The programme notes highlight the many opposites in the story and how this might translate to the younger audiences experiences. Unfortunately I felt the 70 minutes of the production were too crowded with the mechanism of the puppetry and the thrill of the story and the more serious themes not fully explored. As a production working with schools in Fife the low attendance must have been disappointing but it is not clear whether this is due to the company, AttFife the schools or is a general affect of the recession. |
| All | Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments. | good | A cast of six give a good ensemble performance with lots of multiple casting apart from Peter Pan and Wendy. The cast very effectively manipulate the shadow puppets and simple staging but in the fast flow of the production do not get much of an opportunity to develop any of the characters very far. |
| 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 | In order to fit a well known story into 70 minutes all the various storylines are compressed and sometimes introduced without being developed to their conclusion. Dougie Irvine is credited with both adapting the Barrie novel & directing the piece |

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 |
|-------------------|--|-----------|---|
| Theatre, Dance | Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation. | good | It was not immediately apparent why Mrs Darling had been cast as a male actor and to have 5 male and only one female in the cast seemed unbalanced. The direction brought out the potential of the shadow puppetry but sometimes to the sacrifice of the clear development of the story. The production is very busy and would have benefited from a longer presentation to bring out the themes suggested in the programme notes. Perhaps due to a small and not particularly responsive audience at the performance I saw in a large theatre the highs and lows of the plot merged a bit too much. |
| Dance, Theatre | Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production. | competent | There was no credit in the programme for sound and sound effects/music did not intrude with the text in this storytelling focused production. |
| 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 | The set & shadow puppetry was designed by Fabrizio Ferrari along with two colleagues in a collaboration with Teatro Gioco Vita. There was very imaginative use of screens for forward and back projection of the shadow puppets. The low light levels necessary to combine live action & the shadows was skilfully integrated into the lighting design by Graham Sutherland which featured a lot of side lighting reminiscent of a dance production. While it was not made clear by the venue when they informed me of the cancellation at Bathgate it was suggested that there had been considerable technical problems fitting the production into the theatre. From seeing the show at Rothes Halls I can understand why there might be problems with the dimensions of some touring venues. These issues should have been sorted out by Visible Fictions in the design and production stages prior to 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> | good | The performance ran technically very smoothly throughout a complex and fast moving show. |
| 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</p> | | Around 80 to 90 at a 10am matinee (with only two school groups) in an auditorium that can seat up to 700 was disappointing and resulted in a quiet response. The school group in front of me were engaged throughout but not over enthusiastic in talking about the show as they left the theatre. The show was marketed as for 8+ but there were |

| Artform | Criteria | Rating | Comments and key reasons for rating |
|---------|---|--------|--|
| | <p>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>several younger people in the audience whose attention was held during the performance.</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 | <p>The Rothes Hall programme describes a Visible Fictions residency with schools clusters in Fife prior the performance but I did not attend any of this activity.</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> | 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 | Technically the show fitted the stage & raked seating gave good sightlines but the auditorium was substantially too large for the audience at this performance |
| Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc. | Very little information front of house for this production but lots of displays for future productions |
| 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. | Web site leaflets, posters and extensive press reviews from opening at the Platform. Website is clear and informative with lots of pictures and links to education pack. Leaflet & Poster design is stark and dark echoing well the extensive use of shadow puppetry and exploration of some of Barrie's original themes in this production |
| Ease of booking and payment | Regal Community theatre took a phone booking after several attempts to get through to an engaged line. When the show was cancelled a few days prior to the performance the box office was very good at informing me by phone, refunding and apologising for the inconvenience. Internet booking for Rothes Hall very simple and tickets posted out promptly. |
| Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route? | Signposting within Glenrothes to hall and car parking is excellent. Venue is part of shopping centre, library complex with excellent public transport |
| External signage and signposting | Very good |
| Internal directional signage | Very good |
| Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see? | Very good |
| Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? | 10 am weekday suitable for schools matinee open to public, 70minute performance without interval suitable for schools show |
| Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) | Very friendly and informative front of house staff, good value basic cafe attached to venue |
| Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ² | Well displayed on website and printed 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

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.

Visible Fictions welcomes this assessment and the opportunities it gives to reflect upon some of the Specialist Advisor's comments. We are delighted that the Advisor gave an overall rating of 'Good' and that this rating was indicative of the overall response from audiences and critics across the country.

The process of any assessment is always a challenging one. In our opinion, a satisfactory assessment process should involve a thorough understanding of any artist's and organisations' intent, aspirations and also any challenging issues that may have occurred for them during the process of creation and/or touring.

However there are aspects of this assessment that have not been reported accurately by the Advisor. Without accuracy, the document can become a mix of assumptions and misinformation and therefore as a learning tool, it does not fulfil its potential for artists, organisations and ultimately the SAC. In future it may be beneficial that Advisors engage in a dialogue with all parties to clarify processes, problems and aspirations before committing any assessment conclusions to paper.

As this document is a matter of public record, it is important to point out that the Advisor also inaccurately reported that the set & shadow puppetry was designed by Fabrizio Ferrari. The Set Design was by Fabrizio Montecchi and the Puppet Design by Federica Ferrari.

