



### 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:** Wee Stories and National Theatre of Scotland

**Venue:** Lyth Arts Centre

**Title of Event:** One Giant Leap

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** September 9<sup>th</sup> 2008

**Overall Rating:** Good

Attended the production with two boys as my barometer - to see if my non-scientific mind didn't grasp stuff would theirs, and what would they think of a show that could be seen as school out of school time? They were very impressed, enjoyed it and got lots of the ideas, and so did I. Great to go to a show and learn with young people and to have something to have a conversation about that isn't TV - to have a conversation about ideas. This production created that opportunity. Well worth it!

Neither myself or the boys got all the names of all those folk but then catching their imaginations enough to get them researching the information for themselves is surely enough for one and half hours entertainment. We were also confused by the puppet priest since we were unsure who this character was on his initial appearance, partly because we couldn't see him and partly because there seemed to be a lack of set-up to his arrival and this was a missed opportunity since a new character being introduced at that point was an astute choice and just what we needed.

I think the concept of this show is really good and the delivery is solid. Lots of starting points for thoughts, conversations and new ideas & a bibliography in the programme.

Name:  Alex Patience  Date:  19  /  09  /  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>	Good	<p>I went to the show with two boys – one was 11 and the other 14. I did look to bring a girl along but friends' children in the area were limited to boys only. So I have taken their response and perspective into consideration and noted any relevant input. This is a tricky show – the vast amount of information to share with the audience to enable us to engage with the ideas involved is pretty hefty. Then add into this bag the role of the church and it could have been overwhelming for all of us. I think the company made very astute choices in how they represented these large concepts– the use of the puppet as the priest and the use of the song/ catechism are very good effective choices. The downside is really that the boys and myself were confused on the arrival of the puppet character and lost the plot – so to speak – part of that was due to, on the first appearance of the puppet it was not positioned in the light so we could see it but it seemed there wasn't enough set-up or focus given to this characters introduction. The inclusion of this puppet was also a good choice because it also could have given us another 'real' person to ground the story but this didn't happen since we had to play catch-up working out who he was and how he fit into the story. The confused and number befuddled adult was a good choice since there are probably a few of us in every audience they perform to, but it also makes a very warm approachable character for the younger audience members too – an adult who doesn't think he knows everything – you have to like that. I have seen Wee Stories shows in the past and love the weaving of story, humour and humanity that happens in their work and these were definitely a part of this production. In other hands it could have been very heavy going, but as an audience we weren't overwhelmed and I think the majority of us had a very enjoyable and thought provoking time.</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>Great idea to include a theatre piece with these ideas and themes and to tour it within a mix of general arts venues rather than just to schools. I really liked the fact that during this experience we were all learning things – that children and adults, who aren't teachers, could chat about something like this outwith the school environment and share ideas and share a learning process and an even more important thought - that learning is a lifelong process.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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 <sup>1</sup>below for guidance</p>	Good	Brings across in an understandable manner the history of the scientific thought of space and astronomy. And it did it in a way which although geared towards children was very interesting for the non scientific adult such as myself. I had an interesting informative evening.
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	Very comfortable and easy performers, although there was a bit of stumbling on words which I remember from the initial tour when I saw it in Aberdeen. There is an incredible amount of text and much of it does come out at a rate of knots but it is really unsettling for the audience when a series of stumbles like this happen, because it takes our minds from the facts which we really need to grasp and we start worrying for the performer. This only happened in a couple of sections of the show. The boys really liked the characters a lot and were amazed by all those facts just pouring out.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/A	I always feel a bit unsure about not including this in a performance piece since the flow of movement and use of the space in exactly what happens even when it's not a dance piece but it is included in the other ways...
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	Lots and lots of facts in this show – I asked the two boys what they thought of the amount of facts and they seemed fairly okay with the idea of them being thrown at them and not that concerned that things like names of people really hadn't stayed with them. They were both a bit unclear as to why the puppet had been in the piece and hadn't worked out that it was the religious figure. They did enjoy the show, found it funny, full of interesting and generally understandable information and told in an interesting way. Both were impressed by the inclusion of the environmental awareness and the idea that with climate change the earth is changing and that maybe that is part of a process – although not letting us off the hook as far as controlling our responsibility to limit our impact. Both of these boys are part of Christian families and during the performance I did get a bit anxious that they would be offended or put off by the sections dealing with religion and the church, but they seemed to feel it kept within something they felt okay with and that the 'Church' was what was being shown in an over controlling light - not a belief in Christ/God. Both were unsure that their classes would be happy to sing-along-with the songs, but felt that maybe younger children would more easily comply. One said they did think that the singing along would help you memorise the ideas.

<sup>1</sup> 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	With all the facts to cram into our heads and catch our imaginations it's a tricky balance of keeping things moving and interesting, without distracting us from the information. Lots of concepts were re-enforced by the staging – actually walking into the audience area to show the distances between planets, and giving us very human moments to keep things in an understandable scale.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.		Mix of live music with performer seen on stage and some recorded audio. Very good to have the live music and this also gave the company the ability to switch the musician into the performance.
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.	Good	Interesting look to the set –with the touches of magic – pinprick lights appearing to show the shaping of stars locations, magnetically moving pieces across the backwall of the set, screens with projections. There were lots of props which were generally set-up fairly quickly and effectively. The changing look helped keep everyone engaged and re-enforced the ideas in the piece. The final image created by taking elements from the set and props, was a structure on stage reflecting the Shuttle itself. Nice touch. The older boy saw that but the younger didn't. The tour is extensive – starting with 3 shows in Shetland & Orkney, and then coming through to do 12 shows in the Highlands and the remaining 8 shows further south. So the design works well and although there was a fair amount of stuff on stage I think it would pack up fairly well to tour without too much labour and cost.
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	Technically fairly simple but everything worked well and with no obvious hitches.
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,</p>		At Lyth Arts Centre it was almost a full house, which is approximately 60. The audience response was very good and the audience were of a good mix of ages – only some had children with them.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc		
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	
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	Although it outlines on the publicity material that 'NTS Learn Dept will connect with teachers and pupils to create exciting and accessible events and resources' I am not aware of this happening within this area with this performance.

## 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	Good choice – small enough to keep the performers of the show close and therefore the science and many facts very immediate and human.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Free programme available at the performance. A3 sheet folded in half; it contains interesting images, scientific facts, a bibliography and then information on Wee Stories and NTS companies.
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.	I am on the Lyth mail out since I have been to Lyth events, so it arrived at my home. Website information is also easy to locate. Publicity material is well produced, attractive and informative.
Ease of booking and payment	Good
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Not on a main road but still relatively easy to locate – has brown road signs from road to venue.
External signage and signposting	Good
Internal directional signage	Small venue with everything laid out in an easily understandable way.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Yes - Lyth has good provision and access.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Yes – worked well.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very good.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Yes.

<sup>2</sup> 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.