



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 in association with NTS

Venue: Caol Community Centre nr Fort William

Title of Event: One Giant Leap

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc) **Performance**

Date of Visit: 17th September 2008

Overall Rating:

(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.)

Competent – Had this been a preview or work in progress performance I would certainly have rated it as good. As it is too much is crowded into the production and the performance lacks the repartee between the performers present in other Wee Stories shows. An attempt to produce a show dealing with very important issues (how we treat the planet and how we communicate concepts to the next generation) is in there somewhere but not yet ready at this performance.

Name: __Sandy Maxwell__ Date: _23/09/08

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.	competent	This is a variation from the theatre style of previous Wee Stories shows including Iain Johnstone, Andy Cannon & David Trouton. They attempt to take on a wide range of material (including history, astronomy, religion and philosophy) with some of their usual informative but fun style. This sometimes leads to information overload and the production misses a lot of the charm and audience involvement of previous shows.
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	Audiences and promoters familiar with Wee Stories work may find this piece a change from what they would expect from Wee Stories. There is just enough information in the prepublication material to flag this up. This show is targeted at 10+ and adults so will not suit family audiences with younger members that you often see particularly in rural venues.
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	good	In a preview the strap line “a deep thinking show with universal appeal for everyone aged 10- adult” is used. It is certainly deep thinking but perhaps not so great on general appeal.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	competent	Unlike other Wee Stories shows this show is delivered largely in a monologue by Iain Johnstone directly to the audience. There is no conversation between him and the other two (apart from one small scene where Andy plays a bookseller to Iain's customer) Andy provides occasional graphic illustrations of points also directly to the audience and David accompanies on keyboards throughout. The usual “Eric & Ernie” repartee is therefore missing and at times the performance seemed distant from the audience. Despite being the 5 th venue on this tour and previous schools development work in Small Steps & Giant Leaps the production was very raw and even occasional lines were fluffed. I'm sure that the production will develop and improve through the run.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		N/A

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	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	competent	The script needs editing or the performance extended beyond 75mins as too many concepts and words are crowded into the performance.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	competent	As usual for Wee Stories no director is credited with the company self directing the piece. On one hand this means the production will have the chance to improve and develop during the run but tighter external direction might have resulted in a more developed production.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	excellent	David Troutons score and sound effects smoothly accompany the production and his leading of the audience in a plainsong chant about Flat Earth was a welcome relief from the torrent of ideas being delivered by Iain.
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	A deceptively simple set of blackboards & furniture gave the impression of a public lecture or out of hours in a schoolroom. The props were as numerous and inventive as a normal Wee Stories show but showed the advantages of a NTS scale production budget. This is primarily a rural tour to non-theatre venues and the set is on a raised stage presumably for floors in flat halls. This and the use of throat mics ensured good visibility & sound but did add to the slight remoteness of the production from the audience.
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 the performance was smooth including the frequent use of illustrative props.
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,</p>		An audience of around 70/80 included a high number of press & NTS staff. There was a rival fairground on close to the centre that night but there was still a range of ages present from 10+ with around 40/50% adult. The audience was engaged throughout with warm but not ecstatic applause at the end. There were some bits of audience participation such as the plainsong chanting but a running gag involving the audience repeating rhetorical answers was only responded to half-heartedly.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	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.	competent	An extensive reading list is included in the programme & on the websites for 10+ and adults.
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	I did not participate in any workshops or other activity so can not comment.

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	Large hall with friendly bar/reception room being used before the performance.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Tour "A" Board & banner displayed outside the hall on the evening. Free programmes (brief information about the company & NTS but nothing much about the performance apart from reading list), no other interpretive or other material on display in the venue foyer.
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.	Eye catching moon & ape image on posters & leaflets in a style different from the usual Wee Stories "pantomime" style. Overprinting on the posters (presumably by NTS) was very poor with the venue details almost illegibly small. Very few posters displayed in local shops, I didn't get the chance to see local press for adverts or editorial. Website of WEE Stories currently being revised but full details on it & NTS site.
Ease of booking and payment	Advance phone number was a shop that was closed when I tried to phone after 5pm. Tickets were only sold on the door.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Easy to find in Caol with good car parking. Accessible by bus.
External signage and signposting	Community Centre well sign posted
Internal directional signage	Fairly self evident and plenty of venue & NTS staff to assist
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Level access and loose seating format, disabled toilets available.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	7.30pm for 75 minute show. Suitable for age range.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Friendly staff from centre at box office and bar. Plenty of NTS marketing staff present as it was press night.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Present on programmes, posters and websites.

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.